

AMAZING STORIES

QUARTERLY

FALL 1934



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The Sunken World

by Stanton A. Coblentz

Barton's Island

by Harl Vincent

The Malignant Entity

by Otis Adelbert Kline

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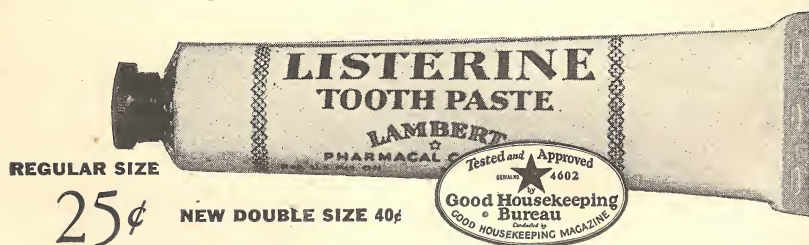


(top) **FORMER LEAGUE BALL PLAYER**

Curtiss W. Scoville is now a business man of Albany, N. Y. He likes Listerine Tooth Paste because "it gets the stains off my teeth quickly."

(below) **"KING KONG" AND "SON OF KONG"**

added to the reputation of Edward Linden, their chief cinematographer. "I have used Listerine Tooth Paste in my travels and at home," he says. "It has always satisfied me because it cleans quick."



VOL. 7—NO. 2
FALL, 1934

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Quarterly

CONTENTS

Barton's Island	8
<i>By Harl Vincent</i>	
The Sunken World	28
<i>By Stanton A. Coblentz</i>	
Edgar Allan Poe (b. 1809 d. 1849)	108
Babylon (Poem)	109
<i>By Robert Bridge Pike</i>	
The Radio Robbery	110
<i>By Captain S. P. Meek, U. S. A.</i>	
The Malignant Entity	120
<i>By Otis Adelbert Kline</i>	
The Breathing of Fishes	128

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Barton's Island

By Harl Vincent

WE consider the present well named the Machine Age. But it is easy to see now that we are a long ways from the limits and perfection of mechanical and scientific inventions. Even those who have recently arrived at the adult age can remember the time when an automobile was not only a rarity, but an awe-inspiring sight and a matter for much wagging of skeptical heads. Yet already the airplane bids fair to being the common mode of long distance transportation within the next few years. New machines are constantly being invented to

eliminate more and more labor. Where will all these new inventions—which can almost be predicted with certainty—lead the great masses who depend on their muscle for their livelihood?

In this story, Harl Vincent, himself a scientific man intimately connected with the world of electrical and mechanical inventions, suggests many possibilities. In "Barton's Island" he brings us much beyond "The Seventh Generation," though he does it in his own realistic manner, with plenty of scientific detail.

PRESIDENT Ross Haven, for the past seven years the nominal chief executive of United North America, apprehensively regarded the heavy jowled, red-faced individual who sat across the desk from him in his private chambers in the new executive mansion high above the crystal roof-tops of the great city of Washington. With a sinking of the heart he recalled that he was completely in the power of this unscrupulous master of men, who had reached the position of virtual dictator in the world-fared republic that was formed after the disastrous Eurasian war of 2179-2191. Entering the frightful holocaust late in 2188, the United States of America had emerged victorious and with most of the world's wealth in her possession, including title to the Dominion of Canada. Now, in 2229, with Europe, Asia and Africa not yet recovered from the terrible ravages of the great war, United North America, with a population of more than a half billion, dominated the world with a ruthless and iron-gloved hand. And Jerome Carter, the President's visitor, dictated its policies.

"I can't do it, Carter," stubbornly stated the President.

Carter leaned his huge bulk forward in his chair, tapping the glass-topped desk with a pudgy forefinger. The President's slight form seemed to wither beneath the baleful glare that came from the deep-set, piggy eyes of his caller. His care-worn face sagged, and its lines deepened into the furrows of approaching old age.

"Oh, but you can do it," said Carter, with a meaning grimace, "Otherwise it's—assassination!"

"You wouldn't dare," whispered Haven.

"Wouldn't I? Who do you suppose was responsible for the passing of the recalcitrant Selwin, former Secretary of Labor?"

Haven started. "You didn't—" he faltered.

"I did," chuckled Carter, gloatingly. "And you'll not use it to my harm either. Apoplexy, the physicians call it. But my chemists know how apoplexy can be brought on quite simply and surely."

"You—you—beast!" stammered the President.

"I forgive you the insult, Mr. President," sneered Carter, with mock of deference. "But, are you ready to listen to reason now?"

Haven became propitiatory. "Perhaps, after all,

you are right," he offered. "You have not given me your reasons in full, you know."

"That is better. And I know this has come to you as a shock, Philip Barton being your own son-in-law. It is entirely due to that relation that he has not already been—removed—as was Selwin. I have a deep affection for you, Mr. President, and for your sweet daughter who was so unfortunate as to have married this Barton. But Barton is dangerous and must be removed from our fair country. In deference to your feelings, I am proposing that he be merely exiled and, in all fairness, I am willing that his wife and certain of his boon companions accompany him. I swear that no violence will come to any of the party, but he must be exiled."

With this hypocritical speech, Carter thrust a paper into the President's hand. "Sign!" he commanded.

* * * * *

TWO hours later the public and private news-speakers throughout all North America repeated the astounding information, that the President had decreed banishment for his own daughter and her husband. It was during the mid-day rest period for the workers, and, in the lower levels of the great cities, thousands of gray-clad toilers slipped from the moving ways to gather in the squares where the huge instruments of the Newscasting Corporation blared forth the announcements from Washington. Pasty-faced laborers, who had not seen the light of day in many months, gazed understandingly and hopelessly at each other, as the significance of the governmental proclamation became evident. For Philip Barton was the friend of the subservient multitude in gray.

In New York, the great center of population which spread its crystal roofs a full fifty miles along the Hudson River and housed more than sixty million souls, a little group gathered in secret behind one of the great pillars that extend from the third sub-level to the fortieth upper level of the city in Cooper Square. A small group it was indeed—not more than twenty men and girls—but they were staunch and loyal supporters of that figure now most in the public eye, Philip Barton. They had eluded the watchful eye of the law, personified by the red-clad police, who were well paid and luxuriously housed by the plutocracy.

They spoke in hushed voices and one of their number, Kirk Paulson by name, held the attention of the group for the moment. A tall, well-knit young man he was, with the high forehead and solemn eyes of the student. So straight were his shoulders and so haughty his mien that the gray denim of the toiler suited him ill.

"Friends," he whispered, "this is the work of Jerome Carter. Philip Barton has become too strong and it is decreed by the dictator that he must go. Fools that we of the despised gray have been, to tolerate conditions as they have developed during the past thirty-eight years! It were better had our parents perished in the great war with the millions of foolish unfortunates of the Eastern Hemisphere."

"But what can we do?" asked one of the listeners. "Our time will come," replied the speaker. "As you all know, I am employed in Barton's laboratory and have been educated with his assistance. I am probably closer to the real Philip Barton than any of his associates, and I have anticipated a move of this sort for some time. And I know much that is not known by Carter and his council of ten. Though they have learned of his sympathies, they have not discovered his secret laboratory where such discoveries are hidden as will revolutionize our world, and pave the way for the freedom of the masses. I cannot tell you more, since the pillars about us may have ears, but I can assure you, that this move of the dictator's will serve only to precipitate the action, which must eventually have been taken by the great inventor."

At that moment a red-coated guard stepped from the shadows and roughly seized a slight wisp of a girl, who lingered near the outskirts of the group. The girl screamed, and, with a roar like a bull, Kirk Paulson tore through the little company and landed a terrific blow on the chin of the officer, who still held the girl's thin arm in his crunching grip. It was a staggering punch, and the guard reeled and released his grasp of the sobbing young woman. But he recovered and, placing his whistle to his lips, blew a shrill blast that would bring a dozen minions of the law to his assistance. One more Kirk swung, this time with all the power of his trained right arm. The guard lay still where he fell.

"Now, we're in for it," gasped Kirk. "This way, friends."

He ducked behind an adjoining pillar and the greater part of the group trooped after him. A few of the fainter-hearted ran for shelter in other directions, as several more of the red guards appeared on the scene, but at least twelve followed into the shadows that lay beyond the confines of the square. A light pop from a stubby weapon in the hand of one of the guards sent a missile spinning through the air—a soft, rubbery something that struck the rearmost of Kirk's followers squarely in the middle of the back with a squashing sound and immediately wrapped twining coils of its material about his body, gripping arms and legs securely and bringing him to the pavement in a helpless heap.

"Run, run," shouted Kirk, darting into a dark passageway. He drew back at the entrance and allowed the rest of the panting, stumbling humans to pass. When the last one had entered, he flung himself against the heavy door and slammed it shut, shooting the bolt just as the officers reached it.

THE passage was almost dark, being illuminated only by a narrow beam of light that filtered through an imperfect floor joint somewhere above. But this was sufficient to reveal the figures of his frightened fol-

lowers huddled together only a short distance ahead.

He produced an electric torch as the pounding on the door became louder and more insistent. The welcome radiance of its beam cast grotesque shadows of the trembling, gray-clad fugitives on the walls of the damp and little-used passage, and a feeling of pity surged through him as he observed their beseeching, fear-ridden countenances.

"Follow me, friends," he called out cheerfully, leading the way into another passage where a second door was bolted behind them.

They clattered down a winding stair that finally brought them to a chamber with circular stone walls and an opening in the center of its floor. Through this opening dropped the leader and, one by one, his companions followed. They found themselves in another passage which ended at a metal door of polished newness. Kirk Paulson placed his lips close to a disk of shiny black that was set in the exact center of the door and spoke a word in a low tone of voice. The door slowly opened, revealing the brightly lighted cage of a lift.

"We're safe, friends," he exulted; "at least for a time."

When all had crowded into the lift, he spoke another word of command into a disk adjoining the automatic operating mechanism on the wall of the cage, and, with gradually increasing speed, they started upward. Up, up sped the lift until it seemed they must have reached the roof of the city, two hundred and fifty levels above their previous position. Then the motion slowed down and soon ceased, the cage coming to a rest at a gleaming metal door, similar to the one through which they had entered at the base of the shaft. At a word from their leader, this door opened as had the other, and they emerged wonderingly into clean brilliant sunlight.

They were not on the roof; rather they were under its crystal expanse and in the most amazing room they had ever entered. Along the walls were many benches, whereon reposed strange machines, retorts, beakers, and the many instruments and supplies that make up a complete laboratory equipment. Kirk laughed at the bewilderment of his flock.

"This is Barton's laboratory," he announced.

Philip Barton hurried in at this moment and, at sight of the group of gray-clad refugees, he uttered an exclamation of surprise, not unmixed with pleasure.

"Why, Kirk," he exclaimed, "what brings you here, with so many of your followers? You have heard the news?"

"Yes, Philip," was the reply. "And I have brought this company by means of the secret lift. We were dispersed by the red guards in the square and were forced to flee."

"Are your companions all trustworthy?"

"Yes, indeed. They are personally known to me and I can vouch for each and every one."

"Then, by George, you shall all accompany me into exile. Are you willing?"

The response was overwhelmingly affirmative, the frightened faces of Kirk's followers taking on a sudden change in expression—a gleam of hope that transfigured them one and all.

"Then you must be hidden immediately," continued Barton. "Lead them into the secret compartments of the Inquisitor, Kirk. The deportation committee will be here shortly."

"Thank you, Philip," said Kirk, hustling his charges across the great laboratory to the sliding doors that communicated with the huge chamber which housed Barton's new air yacht, the Inquisitor.

THEY had no sooner left the room, than the committee appointed to arrange for the banishment of the Barton party arrived on the scene. These included several purple-clad members of the Secret Service, and, though Jerome Carter had taken great pains to keep his name from being linked with the proceedings, Barton knew his handiwork as well as he did the faces of certain of his henchmen among the committee. The committee was followed by President Haven, who entered with bowed head and with trembling fingers resting on the arm of his daughter, Mona Barton. With them were two of Philip's trusted friends, who, Carter had suggested might accompany him—in fact the suggestion had been so strongly urged upon the President that he found it advisable to add their names to the decree of banishment. One of these friends was Jack Sterns, commander of the Pacific Coast Air Patrol, the other Thomas Easton, Chief Chemist of the Synthetic Food Products Corporation.

President Haven extended his hand to Barton, keeping his eyes assiduously from those of the younger man.

"It's all right, Dad," whispered Barton, giving the trembling hand a friendly squeeze, "I understand. And, don't worry about Mona. We shall outwit Carter and will return victorious one of these fine days. I have a plan—but can not explain now. We will be reported dead, but pay no attention—it is to be a ruse of my own devising. I shall find means of communicating with you secretly. Keep a stiff upper lip now—the committee is approaching."

The President now met the steady eyes of the younger man—met them unwaveringly through the film of tears which suddenly covered his own.

"God bless you, my boy," he said.

THE chairman of the committee, Randall Haines, who had cordially detested Philip Barton since college days, now approached the exiled inventor and stared insolently at him.

"All right, Barton," he growled. "You know the instructions. You and Mrs. Barton and your two friends may as well board the Inquisitor at once. Your belongings have been stored on board, and all necessary supplies for your journey are stowed away in the vessel. Get moving now."

Philip Barton declined no reply, but gently disengaged his wife's arms from about the neck of her father and led her sobbing to the entrance of the Inquisitor's berth. President Haven stood, a forlorn and helpless figure, alone in the midst of the intricate equipments of the laboratory, where Barton had spent the greater part of his time for more than twelve years past. He attempted a smile as Philip and Mona bid him a last farewell at the sliding doors, but in this he failed miserably.

Barton's small party was conducted to the entrance of the Inquisitor, and, after his three companions passed within, the inventor was detained by Randall Haines.

"Philip," remarked the chairman, gloatingly, "you are to follow instructions to the letter. There is no escape from the decree signed by your honored father-in-law. You are to proceed with all speed to Biscoe Island, in the Antarctic, uninhabited since the great war. There you will find ample opportunity to cool off and to meditate on the foolhardiness of your recent activities. In that far-off land you will find many problems that will tax your incomparable inventive genius—but your main problem will be to keep alive and well. Remember, your every move from the moment your

vessel leaves its berth will be followed in the screens of the Secret Service detectoscopes—your activities on Biscoe Island will be under the constant scrutiny of operatives of the Department. Should you endeavor to escape the mandate, you will be trailed by one of the swiftest air patrol vessels of the Service and shot down without mercy. Now, go!"

Without reply, Barton entered his vessel and slammed the door on the laughter of Haines and the other members of the committee. He bolted the door firmly in its air-tight casing and proceeded at once to the navigating cabin where he found his companions waiting. His wife was still in tears and he patted her hand comfortingly as he stepped to her side.

"Don't feel badly, dear," he said. "Everything is for the best and we are going to outmaneuver them yet. Trust in me."

"All right, Philip," she said, smiling bravely. "You know best. And it could not be helped, anyway."

Philip stepped to the control platform and waved a mocking salute through the port window to the purple-coated committee that stood stolidly waiting for his departure.

"Farewell," he chuckled inaudibly. "You are due for a shock before long."

Haines had pulled a lever alongside the hull of the vessel and huge sliding panels in the crystal roof overhead slipped back, leaving a clear rectangular opening to the outer air. Philip manipulated the controls and the Inquisitor rose vertically from its cradle, soaring rapidly to a great height above the crystal expanse of the city's upper surface. Mona and Jack Sterns gazed through one of the lower windows at the swiftly receding black rectangle, that marked the spot they had left. Tom Easton stared moodily at the unfamiliar instruments to which Philip Barton paid such close attention.

"Well, so far so good," laughed Philip. "Their surprise comes later."

There was no reply from his companions, and he swung the nose of the vessel about and headed due south. The shimmering expanse of the world's largest city rapidly faded from view, and they were soon out over the Atlantic off the coast of New Jersey, speeding southward at five hundred miles an hour, with the tumbling waters some twenty thousand feet below.

In the Inquisitor

ALMOST entirely a product of Philip Barton's genius, the Inquisitor was much that it did not appear to be. It had been carefully searched by Carter's henchmen, but to them it presented no features differing greatly from the many private air yachts of the wealthy class. But a number of secret compartments had escaped their careful scrutiny and in these were many things that would have astounded them. Hidden also from alien eyes was Kirk Paulson and his group of friends.

Philip Barton, immensely wealthy by inheritance, was of atavistic type. Early in life he had rebelled against the selfishness and arrogance of his class. Not yet two years of age at the conclusion of the great war, he had grown up with the generation of profiteers who had increased their wealth enormously, and concentrated it in powerful groups, which eventually obtained complete control of the government. When he was still in his teens he had his first encounter with the greatest of the industrial giants, Jerome Carter. He had taken an instinctive dislike to the man, and, as he matured, he watched the unbelievable increase in the man's wealth and power. Deeply interested in engineering, he had applied himself assiduously to his studies, but

this had not prevented him from acquainting himself with conditions among the working classes, which had grown rapidly worse under the increasing dominance of Jerome Carter. His interest in the multitude in gray increased, as their misfortunes piled up and became more and more unbearable. But his inventive genius was of such value that he was practically commandeered by the government, and had, of late years, been very carefully watched and guarded.

Seeing that his beloved country was headed for disaster and for an industrial revolution of colossal magnitude, he bent his thoughts and efforts toward a solution of the difficulties and the prevention of the seemingly unavoidable catastrophe. His secret experiments were conducted in a laboratory he had cleverly concealed in the quarters assigned to his use by the government, and the secret equipment of this laboratory was transferred to a hidden compartment of the Inquisitor, when it was completed.

His inventions were in use throughout the civilized world, and were of inestimable value, particularly in the field of air travel. It had been his discoveries that revolutionized aviation in 2219 and brought him into prominence in the engineering fraternity at the early age of thirty. For nearly three centuries previously the relation of the gravitational to the electro-magnetic field was known, it having been proved mathematically in the twentieth century. But it remained for Philip Barton to discover means of utilizing this knowledge for the benefit of mankind. His method of producing contra-gravitational fields had eliminated the use of wings and vertical lifting propellers on all types of air craft. And later his reaction motor obviated the necessity of the horizontal propellers as well, and provided not only much greater fuel economy, but entire independence of the density of air as a medium for obtaining propulsive effect.

The engine room of the Inquisitor was provided with two contra-field generators, each of sufficient power to support the vessel when fully loaded. These generators were of the most improved type and were connected to fore-and-aft pole pieces from whence the contra-gravity flux emanated. When these were energized, a field was produced that could be varied in intensity at will, as well as reversed if the necessity arose. The basic discovery of the graviton had led Barton to the development of this unique apparatus, and the zenith of perfection had been reached in this particular portion of the Inquisitor's mechanism. The graviton, be it remembered, was identified by Barton in the laboratory at a close analogy to the magneton, that final element of magnetism whose relation to magnetism is similar to that of the electron to electricity. Its relation to the earth's gravity field being determined, it was a logical, though by no means a simple, step to the artificial generation of gravitons, both positive and negative. The method of producing a negative gravitonic field surrounding two poles composed of the metal bartonite was his final development, and the world found itself in the possession of a practical means of getting away from the surface of the earth by the repulsive force of the opposing fields.

Earlier types of air craft using the Barton gravitonic field were propelled horizontally by the old style, inefficient propeller, drawing them through the air at speeds not much in excess of three hundred miles an hour, when driven by an electric motor that obtained its power from the energy broadcasts of the Etheric Power Syndicate. Philip's next efforts were along the lines of improving the method of propulsion, and, after much research, he developed the reaction motor, which soon superseded the antiquated propeller drive. His

compounding of the new alloy, extron, provided a material that gave off great quantities of electrons when subjected to an electric current, which heated it to not more than 180 degrees Fahrenheit. The reaction motor was a simple mechanism resembling an electric furnace to which was attached a lengthy tube of insulating material having an inside diameter of nine inches.

The Inquisitor was provided with seven of these motors in the stern and five in the bow, their twelve-foot lengths of tube radiating in the several directions necessary to permit the discharging of their high velocity ionic streams at any desired angle to provide for the driving and steering and stopping of the vessel. The discharge ends of the tubes were set flush with the outer surface of the hull, and the extron chambers at the inner ends were of sufficient capacity to contain material for a journey of twenty hours' duration without recharging, the heating elements being energized by collectors, that obtained power from the above named Syndicate.

As a precautionary measure against the possible, though not probable, failure of both gravitonic field generators, two reaction motors were installed in a vertical position so that their repelling streams could be directed earthward. While not of sufficient power to support the vessel completely, nor to propel it vertically, these motors would prevent its falling with great enough speed to cause serious damage thus providing a valuable safety device.

As a private air yacht, the Inquisitor was the equal of any in United North America. In other respects it was far superior to any. Of true streamline shape, two hundred feet in length and with a maximum diameter of fifty feet, it was a thing of beauty as its silvery nose pushed southward over the course prescribed by the banishment decree. Its luxurious suites and cabins were unoccupied and silent. Philip and his three companions remained in the navigating cabin until the coast line was lost to view.

* * *

JACK STERNS broke the silence. "She sure is a beauty," he said, referring to the vessel, "Too bad we're not on a pleasure trip rather than speeding toward heaven knows what hardships—thanks to Jerome Carter."

"Oh," said Philip, "there won't be many hardships. We are not going to Biscoe Island, as Carter so fondly imagines."

"We're not?" asked his wife in astonishment.

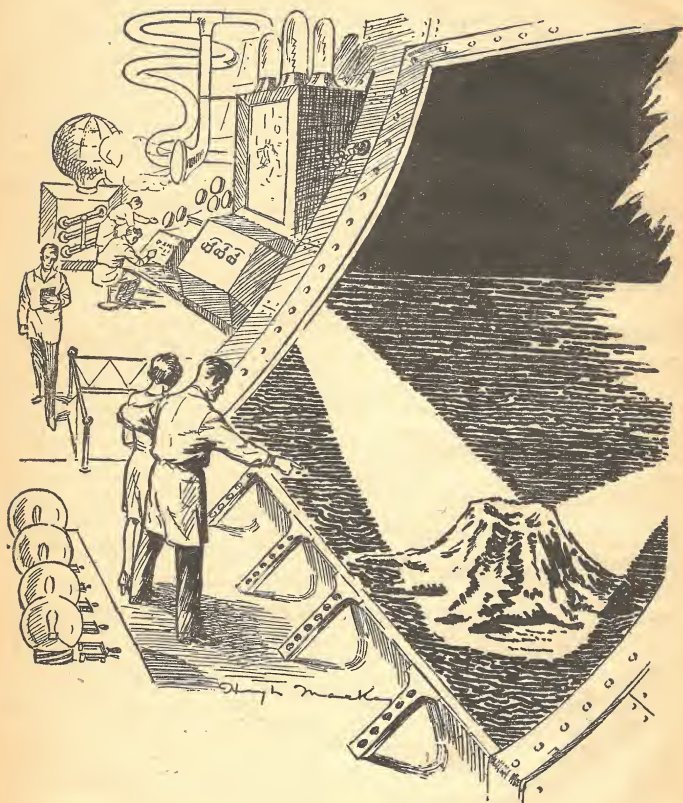
"No, my dear Mona, we're not," he replied. "And within two hours the newscasters will have spread the tidings throughout our native land that the Inquisitor has plunged into the ocean, with all occupants lost."

His listeners gasped in surprise. "But it will not be true?" asked Mona.

"It'll be true as far as our plunging into the ocean is concerned, said Philip, "but we'll all be alive and well and on our way to an entirely different portion of the globe than Carter intended."

"How on earth are you going to do it?" asked Tom Easton.

"Quite simply," Philip replied. "And now I must take you folks into my confidence. The Inquisitor is not what it seems. Or rather, it is much more than it seems. In addition to being a fine air yacht, it is a submarine. Its double cellular hull and transparent viewing ports are designed to withstand external pressures as great as one thousand pounds per square inch of surface. I have arranged for some stage effects that will convince the watchers at the Secret Service telescopes that we have met with an accident. A charge of flash powder has been concealed in the engine room



¶ An island of considerable size had been pushed above the surface by subterranean volcanic action, and the internal fires were being extinguished by the impouring of the ocean.

and this will be set off electrically when I press a hidden button at the control board here. The resulting flare and smoke will do no damage but will completely obscure the engine room from view of the watchers and will give the impression that serious damage has resulted. Then we must do some acting ourselves—pretend extreme fear, despair and demoralization, while the Inquisitor does a nose-dive into the Atlantic, where the searching and penetrating rays of the detectoscopes can not follow. A short journey under water will throw them off the track and we can emerge later and continue on our way—but not to Biscoe Island."

He grinned appreciatively at the exclamations of surprise that greeted this announcement.

"They can not overhear our conversations with their detectoscopes, can they?" asked Mona anxiously.

"No, indeed, though I have an instrument hidden aboard, with which that very thing can be accomplished. What is more, there are many things in the Inquisitor which they can not even see, though they are watching us closely at this moment, and we must be careful that our expressions do not betray the trend of our conversation. For one thing there are twelve other persons on board whom you have not seen."

"Why—where on earth can they be?" asked Tom, "and who are they?"

"There are several secret compartments in the Inquisitor. These are lined with neutroloy, an alloy I have perfected, which is impervious to the searching and penetrating rays of the detectoscope. In one of these compartments is my assistant, Kirk Paulson, together with eleven of his friends in gray."

"How wonderful!" exclaimed Mona. "Kirk is a dear. Are there any women?"

"Yes," answered her husband. "There are at least four, maybe five. I was too hurried to count when I came upon them in the laboratory. They escaped the red guards in Cooper Square and Kirk brought them to my laboratory just before we left."

"But," interrupted Jack Sterns, "can't our friends back in New York and Washington discover with their detectoscopes that there are such compartments that are invisible to them? Won't they encounter blank or opaque spaces with their penetrating rays?"

"No. That is a peculiar property of neutroloy. While it is impervious to the rays as far as disclosing an enclosed object is concerned, it is transparent to them as regards objects on the far side of the enclosing chamber. They may search the entire ship and will be unable to find any unaccounted-for space."

"SUPPOSE Carter plans treachery," suggested Tom. "Suppose this banishment decree is only a blind to deceive the public and that he actually intends to destroy us. He might easily order the Power Syndicate to contrive an accident and cut off the power broadcast."

"I have anticipated that possibility also," replied Philip. "In one of the secret compartments there is a complete generating equipment, which can be started at a moment's notice, and which would supply sufficient power to carry us to our destination."

"There is not much you haven't thought of, is there?" asked Jack admiringly.

"I hope not," was the anxious reply. "Our enemies are not stupid, you know. They may have a trick or two up their sleeves I have not thought of. But I guess we are all right."

"But where are we going, Philip?" asked Mona.

"There is an island of volcanic origin off the west coast of Africa which has never been inhabited or even named. But it is habitable and rich in natural re-

sources. This island appeared above the surface of the ocean only about ten years before the great war and has never been exploited. I have visited it and found it a fine place. From there we shall conduct the long-range activities that are to save our country and our compatriots."

"It is way over my head," complained Tom, "but evidently you know what you are talking about. I'll not be surprised at anything after what you told us."

Mona Barton looked thoughtfully at her husband. His fine, aristocratic features were fixed in the expression of forced despondency, they had all adopted for the benefit of the detectoscope watchers. But she made out a twinkle in his eye, which could not quite be controlled.

"Just about time for the fireworks," he announced. "We are about half way between Savannah and Bermuda and I guess this is about as good a place as any to go to Davy Jones' locker. Remember the play-acting now."

With a barely perceptible movement of his hand he pressed the hidden button and there was a muffled, rumbling report from the engine room below.

His companions feigned violent starts of surprise and Jack Sterns rose to the occasion nobly by rushing to the engine room and opening the door sufficiently to allow a cloud of dense white smoke to issue from it into the corridor. He returned to the navigating cabin, and, with gestures of excitement, told of his findings. Mona wrung her hands at the news and found some little difficulty in maintaining her expression of fear and hopelessness. She wanted rather to laugh.

Philip simulated the frantic manipulation of controls of a pilot, who suddenly found his power fail and his vessel out of control. Actually he was adjusting the speed and angle of descent to provide for a safe dive into the dark waters that quickly loomed close. The descent seemed sickeningly rapid and the angle of the vessel was so steep that the passengers in the navigating cabin found difficulty in maintaining their positions. It was not necessary for the others to act their parts now for they were actually frightened at the swiftness with which the ocean rushed to meet them. Closer and closer they drew to the tumbling surface, and, with a shock that threw them into a heap against the forward wall of the cabin, the Inquisitor pitched nose foremost into the deep.

The Inquisitor Disappears

BEFORE the screen of a detectoscope in one of the offices of the Secret Service in Washington sat Randall Haines and two of his subordinate officers. The view on the screen was that of the interior of the navigating cabin of the Inquisitor. One of the officers kept his fingers on the focus and magnification controls of the instrument to maintain a clear image as the distance to the speeding vessel gradually increased.

"None of them have left the navigating cabin," said one of the watchers, "And they don't appear as worried as one would expect under the circumstances."

"Oh," sneered Haines, "Barton is a cool one, Olsen. He has probably told the others he would fix everything so they need not fear anything unpleasant. But he little knows what is waiting for them at Biscoe Island."

But at that moment the passengers of the Inquisitor betrayed astonishment and fear in the countenances pictured so faithfully in the detectoscope screen.

"By George, something's happened!" exclaimed Haines, as they watched Jack Sterns rush from the navigating cabin in obvious excitement.

Olsen speedily readjusted the penetrating and focusing controls of the instrument and they followed Sterns' movements as he hastened to the engine room and opened the door. Haines shouted his glee as a cloud of dense white smoke issued from the door and Sterns slammed it shut and ran to the navigating cabin with the news. The penetrating ray of the instrument was directed into the heart of the engine room but all that could be seen was dim outlines of the machinery around which there swirled the heavy clouds of smoke. It was quite apparent that an explosion had occurred and, when a view of the navigating cabin was again returned to the screen, the expressions on the passengers' faces gave unmistakable evidence of their knowledge of the seriousness of the situation. Haines chuckled gloatingly as Philip Barton struggled frantically with the controls.

"Barton's end comes even sooner than we expected," he chortled. "The Inquisitor is falling already. Let's watch it from the exterior, Olsen."

With further manipulation of the detectoscope controls, and the shutting off of the penetrating energy, a view of the tumbling waters of the Atlantic was obtained and the Inquisitor could be seen to careen violently and plunge nose down toward the heaving surface. Swifter and swifter it fell, descending rapidly at an angle of about forty-five degrees. Then suddenly it was all over. The nose of the vessel entered the waves with a great cleaving effect, throwing a shimmering spray in every direction as the smooth hull buried its length from sight. The splash returned to the surface like that following a stone tossed into a puddle and the waters closed over the vanished air yacht.

Randall Haines laughed aloud. "Saves a lot of work for the Department," he said. "We should have been busy watching them for all of a year had this not happened. I must report it at once."

"Better wait a bit, sir," admonished Olsen. "The vessel will return to the surface unless the hull was battered in by the force of its dive."

THE searching ray of the detectoscope played over the surface of the ocean for more than a half hour in the vicinity of the accident. Olsen even tried the penetrating ray but it was of no avail since the variable refractive effect of the tumbling waves broke up the screen images completely. A further methodic search of the surface for several miles in all directions from the point where the Inquisitor had vanished produced no results.

Then Haines gave vent to a startled exclamation. "What's that, Olsen?" he asked in excitement, pointing to a small object that bobbed about on the surface of the dark waters.

The magnification was increased rapidly until the object became life-sized on the screen. It was a small wooden packing case, and in black letters on its cover was the name "Inquisitor." There was no further doubt of the loss of the vessel and its passengers.

Randall Haines could contain himself no longer and he hastened to the television radio in the adjoining room. After a moment of setting a number-combination on a series of dials on the instrument, the heavy features of Jerome Carter appeared in a brightly illuminated square on its face.

"Hello Haines," greeted the unpleasant voice, "What's the news?"

"They've been sunk!" was the reply.

"Sunk?" asked Carter in startled voice, "What do you mean?"

"There was an explosion in the engine room of the Inquisitor and she went down out of control. She

dove into the ocean as nicely as one of those performers at the Century this week, and never came up."

Carter's ruddy features purpled. He seemed about to burst. "By God, Haines!" he ejaculated. "If you did this I'll have you reduced to the gray."

"I didn't, Sir. I didn't!" palpitated the now frightened Haines, "Olsen and Anthony will bear me out. It was pure accident. Something we didn't count on. I'd think you would be pleased."

"Pleased? Pleased?" sputtered Carter, "why man, don't you realize this will set the gray multitude into seething uproar? Philip Barton is their idol, and we went the absolute limit in arranging for his exile. Even as it is, there has been difficulty in keeping them in hand. Now, nothing on earth can convince them that the accident was not of our contriving. The government will be branded as Barton's murderer, and the workers may do almost anything in their excitement."

"Then the Newscasting Corporation must be kept ignorant of this development," said Haines with an inspiration.

"Yes, that might be successful," replied Carter, thoughtfully, "but it will be necessary to invent news of their movements for many months to keep the workers from suspecting."

* * * * *

BUT Randall Haines had reckoned without his subordinates, for, not having orders to the contrary, Olsen had already reported the eventful happening to the newscasting Corporation, and while Haines still conversed with Jerome Carter, the news-speakers were spreading the information throughout the continent.

Through the lower levels of the great cities it spread like wildfire, and gray-clad workers paused in their tasks to send up prayers for the souls of Philip Barton and his wife and companions. Here and there they exchanged furtive glances and passed signs that boded ill for the plutocracy of the upper levels.

Within the hour there was rioting in New York and in several others of the large centers, but it was quickly subdued by violent action of the red guards. For the pitiable multitude in gray was without an organization, without a leader of sufficient ability to unite them in the emergency.

President Haven bore the brunt of recrimination heaped on the government by the workers and by certain of those of the purple, who were friends and admirers of Philip Barton. He was openly accused of the murder of his own daughter, and, when he attempted to address a crowd that had gathered in Capitol Square in Washington, he was hissed down. After this experience he retired to his own chambers under heavy guard. But in the innermost recess of his thoughts he was glad. He did not believe that his daughter was lost, nor that her husband and his companions had been drowned in the cold waters of the Atlantic. He trusted Philip Barton, and to himself he repeated, over and over again, the assurance he had been given by the inventor, that a reported disaster would be a ruse and was not to be credited. But his position was extremely difficult and he called on Carter for assistance and advice. But that wily person had eliminated himself as completely as if he had vanished from the face of the earth. It was impossible to locate him by radio at any of his offices or at his living quarters. With trouble brewing, he had left the President to face it alone. The secret council of ten had likewise become non-existent as far as any possibility of locating them was concerned. But the Secret Service was loyal to its duties and President Haven felt certain of his safety from personal violence when he reached his own rooms, escorted by nine members of the Department.

UNKNOWN to the wearers of the purple, there were three gathering places of the gray. The largest, in New York City, was cleverly hidden in a disused warehouse space below one of the deepest sub-levels. This space was of sufficient size to permit more than two thousand workers to listen to the exhortations of the few speakers, who had the temerity to address them from time to time. Another was located in Chicago, this one being fully as large as the first. A third, somewhat smaller, had been recently established in San Francisco. The three headquarters were interconnected by a secret television-radio public address system, and the growing organization activities, which had been interrupted by Barton's exile, could thus be carried on without knowledge of the red police or of the world at large.

Less than five hours after the reported loss of Philip Barton's vessel, these three halls were crowded to the utmost, and a red-faced individual addressed the three audiences from the platform of the meeting place in New York. He was Arnold Baxter, a close friend of Kirk Paulson, and he spoke vigorously and pointedly.

"Friends," he said, "we must not deceive ourselves in this matter of the exiling of Philip Barton. We must not place the blame upon the shoulders of his father-in-law President Haven, though he signed the decree of banishment. It has become increasingly evident during recent years that there is a guiding hand, a dictator of the policies of our government. And that dictator is none other than Jerome Carter. We may rest assured that it was by his influence this dastardly action was taken. And to me, it is clearly evident that the persuasion of our President to sign the fatal paper was accomplished only by a clever presentment of the banishment decree, as something that could not possibly result in harm to his daughter or to her husband. But this vicious arch-enemy of ours, Carter, had planned cleverly that the voyage of the Inquisitor was to provide a simple and completely masked means of getting Barton out of the way forever. He has accomplished his purpose to our everlasting loss and sorrow. Our dear friend now lies at the bottom of the Atlantic and his great work must be continued by another. Kirk Paulson is the only man in United North America who can measure up to the necessity. Is Kirk here?"

There was no response for a few minutes. Then a piping voice spoke up from the rear of the auditorium: "There was a group in Cooper Square at noon time. Kirk was among them. But they were dispersed by the red guards, and he has not been seen since. My sister was in the group and we have heard nothing from her either."

"Another example of this unbearable tyranny," shouted Arnold Baxter. "They have undoubtedly been incarcerated by the red police. But we must not delay for long. Philip Barton must be avenged and, oh friends, if you but realized it, our power is more than sufficient to accomplish the overthrow of the present régime and the establishment of a new order of things—government actually 'of the people, by the people and for the people.' Our number is legion and, but for the fact that we are unorganized, we could this minute take things in our own hands. True, we have been kept uneducated and undernourished. We have been divided and sequestered to prevent this very organizing. And why? Because we are feared by those of the purple. Full well do they appreciate the strength we could muster were we properly led and banded together. And that is the very reason for Jerome Carter's fear of Barton, who befriended us well, but a bit too openly."

"The republican form of government is sound in

principle and I do not believe that any of us are in favor of a substitute. But our actual government is no longer a republic. The control has gradually passed from the hands of the people, where it belongs by constitutional right, to the hands of a few men who have amassed huge fortunes by inheritance, supplemented by profiteering in the labor of our down-trodden millions. These have subsidized the politicians and have controlled the elections for decades. They have forced the passage of laws which benefit their own class and discriminate against ours. This class legislation has poisoned our entire social structure, until, during the past two generations, we have degenerated into the suffering, hopeless lot we now are.

"But an end must come to everything, and this last act of Carter's is the final blow that must precipitate action. Unfit as I am to plan and direct our activities, I must endeavor to get things started in the absence of Kirk Paulson. He is our logical leader, and is by far the most capable among us, now that Philip Barton is gone, but we must not delay. I have a plan for initial action that I had already discussed with Kirk and we must put it into effect at once. In fact, it is my belief we should take even more serious action than the mere organizing proposed."

Pandemonium reigned in the hall. Cheers rent the air and the listeners gave vent to the enthusiasm as they had not dared for many years.

"The plan! The plan!" demanded many voices when a semblance of order was restored.

WHILE Arnold Baxter was expounding the plan perfecting a powerful organization of the workers, Jerome Carter and his secret council of ten were gathered together in a chamber of the Administration Building in Washington. Ruthless determination was written on his hard features as he addressed the ten men who, with himself, controlled ninety-two per cent. of the wealth of United North America.

"Gentlemen," he said, "the gist of the matter is this: War has been declared by this action of ours in getting rid of Barton. Unwittingly we have rid ourselves of him too suddenly and effectively. The workers will rise against us—if we allow them to. Already there are rumblings from below in many of our cities. The unrest will spread rapidly—unless we prevent it. And we must prevent it. There is no time to be lost."

"True. But how are we to prevent it?" asked Emory Cass, President of the great Newscasting Corporation of North America.

"Rhusenic angina," whispered Carter hoarsely.

The council was struck speechless by the words and by the implication of Carter's voice and sinister smile. For the dread and almost certainly fatal heart affection caused by the absorption into the system of rhusenic, an extremely powerful explosive, had been one of the most terrible causes of mortality during the latter days of the great war.

"We couldn't," gasped Emory Cass.

"We must," replied Carter firmly. He turned to another member of the council, Alexander DeWolf, President of the United North American Water Supply Syndicate. "And it's up to you, Alec," he stated.

DeWolf paled and he stammered an objection. "But—but—Carter—that's murder," he said.

"It's self-defense," replied Carter. "Are we to sit idly by and permit the rabble to repeat the horrors of communistic Asia? Are we to be murdered in our beds by a horde of uncouth, maddened brutes? No, my dear Alec, it's murder prevention and I think you will not object to my plan."

"What is the plan?" asked DeWolf submissively.

"It's more than a plan," said Carter. "It's an order. In twelve of the largest cities one hundred thousand workers will be infected with rhusene to-morrow morning when they swallow their first drink of water. You will see to it that, in each of the first twelve cities of the land, sufficient quantities of the compound is introduced into reservoirs feeding the proper number of sections of the lower levels to account for that number."

"One hundred thousand in each of twelve cities?" breathed DeWolf. "Why, that is one million two hundred thousand people."

"Precisely," agreed Carter. "And that may prove to be an ample number. If not, we'll take further action. The meeting is dismissed."

The members of the secret council filed from the room in silence and without looking at one another.

In the President's Home

WHEN the Inquisitor struck the heaving waters of the ocean it was with considerably more force than Philip intended. The occupants of the navigating cabin were severely shaken up and bruised, Philip himself receiving a blow on the forehead from sudden contact with the instrument board, which blow nearly rendered him unconscious. So dazed was he by the impact that it was several minutes before he recovered sufficiently to remember the necessary changes in the adjustments of the controls to adapt the vessel to movement in the denser medium they had entered. Full gravity had been restored just before the dive and he had pulled the lever which opened the sea-cocks and admitted water to the ballast compartments. It was thus that he came to the realization that they were diving rapidly toward the bottom of the ocean and the depth indicator registered over one thousand feet when he came fully to his senses. The ballast tanks were filling rapidly and his first action was to close the sea-cocks, first in the bow and then in the stern compartments to restore the vessel to an even keel.

He then glanced at Mona and his male companions and saw that, though considerably upset by the experience, they were alive and not much injured. He smiled encouragingly at Mona's questioning glance and then turned full energy into the stern reaction motors. The pumps were at work emptying much of the water they had taken aboard and it was not long before they had risen to a depth of about a hundred feet below the surface and were headed southward at full speed. In the denser medium the Inquisitor's speed was greatly reduced and it required full energy from the emergency power plant to drive them at two miles a minute.

The great searchlights were turned on and these illuminated the water for nearly a quarter of a mile ahead. Philip gazed anxiously into the green opalescence, for he had not previously driven the vessel at so considerable a speed through the comparatively unknown element. His charts showed depths of two thousand feet and more, throughout the course he was following, but he was nervously apprehensive of unknown shoals, for the soundings had been made more than a century previously, before ocean travel with floating or sub-surface vessels had been abandoned for the simpler and cheaper air travel.

He instructed Jack and Tom in the matter of sending an empty packing case through the air lock to deceive the watchers in Washington. He also requested them to release Kirk Paulson and his companions from their hiding place and these soon crowded into the navigating cabin exhibiting many bruises and considerable concern over the cause of the shock, which had thrown them into scrambling heaps in the chamber they had

occupied. Their surprise and relief on learning the true state of affairs was electric and the atmosphere of the cabin soon became one of rejoicing and exultation.

For two hours the Inquisitor held her speed and course, and then, with a sigh of relief, Philip turned her nose upward and prepared to take the ship once more into the element for which she was primarily designed. The vessel was soon bobbing about on the surface, and Philip scanned the heavens carefully for signs of any transatlantic vessel, which might discover and report them. But the skies were clear and he started the gravitonic field generators at once. The dripping hull of the ship rose eagerly to the controls and they soon resumed the normal air-cruising level of twenty thousand feet.

"Now, Jack," he said, when the course had been changed to the southeast and the speed increased to five hundred miles an hour, "I wish you would take the controls for a time. I want to get some of my instruments working and see what is happening back home."

This arrangement being made, he greeted Kirk's followers and mutual introductions followed, after which Mona took the women in charge, and Tom the men, all being assigned to staterooms in the vessel which was to be their home for some time.

He retired to one of the secret chambers with Kirk Paulson, and the two men were soon busily engaged with a detectoscope, which was one of the portions of the equipment of the hidden compartment. A series of sliding panels in the neutrology wall was opened to permit the directing of the rays of the instrument in a northwesterly direction without interference. The city of Washington was soon brought into view on the rectangular screen and Philip immediately found the Administration Building with the searching ray. With the penetrating ray in service he quickly obtained access to the President's private office, where he found two secretaries at work. But President Haven was not there. He observed that the secretaries were conversing occasionally in jerky and half-frightened syllables and he hastened to bring into service one of his most recent inventions, the detectophone. His model was the only instrument of its kind in existence and was capable of picking up the speech of those far-away assistants in the Administration Building and bringing their words to the Inquisitor over the rays projected from the standard detectoscope.

"Haven didn't take it as seriously as I expected," spoke one of the men visible on the screen.

"No," replied the other, "That occurred to me also."

"But Carter's scared."

"Yes."

"They say he can't be located."

"So I heard."

"Where's Haven?"

"Home, I guess."

PHILIP had heard all he wished and he soon adjusted the searching ray to reach for the location of the President's living quarters. These were quickly penetrated and he found Ross Haven in his own spacious drawing-room with Mrs. Haven and Frances, the youngest daughter. The detectophone was still in operation, and the voices of the three came clearly to Philip and Kirk.

"But, Daddy, are you sure?" asked Frances, wiping her eyes with a corner of her handkerchief.

"I trust Philip," was the reply. "He told me definitely that he planned to make it appear that they were lost and assured me that any news to that effect would be untrue."

"Oh, I do hope you are right," spoke Mrs. Haven in a tone of extreme anxiety. "If anything has really happened to Mona it will be the death of me."

"Don't worry now, mother," spoke the President, patting her shoulder comfortably. "Philip would not have made the statements he did unless they were true."

Kirk looked at his superior. "Hadh't we better set their minds at rest?" he asked.

"Yes, I think we had," replied Philip, "but, with the ship in motion we can project only our voices. That should be enough though. Get Mona here."

"Sure," agreed Kirk, starting at once to locate her.

Philip busied himself with another contrivance that occupied a space on the long bench adjoining the detectoscope and the detectophone. This invention had also not been disclosed to the world, though Philip had perfected it more than a year previously. It was the projectophone, which, by a simple connection to the detectophone and utilizing the searching and penetrating rays of the standard detectoscope, enabled one to carry on a two-way conversation with persons pictured on the screen.

Mona returned with Kirk just as he had completed the necessary connections, and, when she saw her parents and sister pictured before her eyes, and heard their familiar voices in worried conversation, she uttered an exclamation of surprise and joy.

"What was that?" asked her mother in a startled voice, "I thought I heard Mona speak."

"You did, mother, you did," Mona exclaimed. "I am safe on the Inquisitor and can see you and hear you, thanks to one of Philip's secret inventions."

"But—but," stammered her mother, looking about in a confused manner, "I hear you perfectly. But I can not see you, and your voice seems to come from nowhere. It is everywhere in the room."

Philip laughed aloud. "It must seem mysterious at that, Mrs. Haven," he said. "But it is an accomplished fact nevertheless. And we are all safe, just as Mona says."

The President spoke. "What actually happened?" he asked.

"I drove the Inquisitor under water," replied Philip, "after making it appear that an engine room explosion had damaged the vessel beyond repair. We traveled below the surface for two hours, but are now in the air and headed toward an almost unknown island under our own emergency power."

Mrs. Haven cried her relief on her husband's shoulder as she heard the distant voice, and Frances was so excited, that she could not wait to talk with her beloved sister. The two-day conversation was carried on for some time, and Philip betrayed great concern, when he learned of the effect the report of his death had produced among the masses in the lower levels of the cities.

"They must not start trouble now," he said, "or they will upset all my plans. I must increase speed and get to our destination at once so our further work can be started. So, farewell for a time, folks. We'll get in touch with you often."

IT was thus a happy-faced group that faded from the screen, when Barton changed the adjustments to search for Jerome Carter. He was unable to locate the dictator either in his New York or Washington office, or in his home, so he returned to the navigating cabin and took over the controls from Jack Sterns.

"We must rush to our destination," he announced. "Trouble is brewing fast at home and there are certain things I can do only from the headquarters on solid ground."

"How much further is it?" asked Kirk.

"About four thousand miles air line. Our island is not far from St. Helena, where the emperor Napoleon spent six years in exile more than four centuries ago."

"Then we're bound for a stylish neighborhood for exiles," laughed Tom Easton.

"Yes," said Philip, "and I want to get there in two hours."

"Can you do it?" asked Jack, in surprise.

"I think so. We're going up about twenty miles further where there is practically no air resistance. Of course the rotation of the earth is against us, if our height makes us independent of it, since it travels from west to east at the surface speed of nearly a thousand miles an hour. But we are cutting across the plane of the equator at an angle of about forty-five degrees, so the adverse effect can be only half of that speed. And I think the Inquisitor can do 2500 miles an hour at the higher altitude."

The altimeter already showed eighty thousand feet and was still mounting. The speed indicator soon showed nearly fifty miles a minute, so there was little doubt of accomplishing Philip's desire.

DARKNESS had long since been overtaken when Philip slowed down the vessel and maneuvered to a lower altitude. By his dead reckoning they had about reached their goal, and he sent Jack to the platform on the upper surface of the ship to take observations. While Jack was aloft Philip bent over his chart and pointed out the position of the island; longitude twelve degrees and twenty minutes west, latitude twenty-one degrees and two minutes south. In a few minutes Jack returned with the sextant and his observation checked the dead reckoning almost exactly. They had reached the island.

All was in darkness beneath save for the light of the moon as it shimmered on the tumbling waters. Slowly the Inquisitor was dropped to two thousand feet altitude and the searchlights were directed downwards. The searching pencils of white radiance soon located a rugged coast line, where foaming white breakers dashed rhythmically against rocky cliffs, that reared their tops safely out of reach. It was less than two miles ahead, and in a very few minutes the Inquisitor had been maneuvered to a landing in a clear space well back from the rocky shore.

Philip mustered all hands, hitherto hidden in one of the secret compartments, as soon as the landing was made, and they set to work with a will as he directed them to convey to the outside the sections of a knocked-down structural tower and several cases of apparatus and parts which were required in the experiments to follow. The light metal sections were rapidly assembled in the flat open space alongside the vessel, great flood-lights being brought into play to light the scene as brightly as day. Within the hour a cage-like structure reared itself skyward to a height of more than seventy feet, and Philip and Kirk erected a pivoted horizontal member at the top, which was assembled from short joints of shining metallic tubing to form a canon-like tube of some twenty feet in length. A small electric motor was attached to gearing that swung this member about its vertical axis and a similar motor applied to the horizontal axis, so that the tube could be swung to any point of the compass by remote control or to any angle with relation to the horizontal. Insulated cables were brought down the lattice-work of the tower and carried into the Inquisitor where they were attached to a mechanism in the laboratory compartment.

"Now," said Philip, when the work was completed to

his satisfaction, "we are ready for some serious work, and I do not believe we are much too soon."

He first brought the detectoscope and its allied instruments into action. The first search carried the observers to the extreme lower levels of New York City where it focused on the meeting being addressed by Arnold Baxter. Kirk Paulson expressed his glee at the size of the gathering, but his face took on a serious expression when the first words of the speaker were made audible by the detectophone:

"And friends," intoned the voice of Arnold Baxter, "we must strike our first blow to-morrow morning. And it shall be a decisive blow that will show our power in no uncertain manner. Paulson is not here—Philip Barton lies in a watery grave—but we must act. Jerome Carter and the council of ten must go. Much as we all hate the thought of bloodshed, there is no other way. I have the living addresses of all eleven, and these must be visited before dawn and each must pay the penalty with his life. We have weapons and we have brave souls to use them. Philip Barton must be avenged and our once glorious country must be restored to its birthright of freedom and happiness. Who will volunteer?"

There was a storm of cheers from the crowd in the auditorium, and from the loud speakers connected with the Chicago and San Francisco meetings came clearly the clamorous approval of the gatherings assembled at those points.

Kirk's face paled. "Great Scott, Philip," he exclaimed, "they are mad. It means a bloody civil war if they are not stopped."

"Just what I feared," agreed Philip. "And we must stop them."

He energized the projectophone mechanism and brought the image of Arnold Baxter very close in the screen. All members of the party on board the vessel were assembled in the laboratory, and they watched and listened to the proceedings in breathless silence.

"Speak quietly to Baxter now, Kirk," directed Philip. Kirk placed his lips to the microphone and whispered, "Baxter."

The leader of the gray assemblage was panting from the excitement and exertion of his speech, but he turned his head sharply at sound of the voice that whispered in his ear from nowhere.

"Baxter," repeated Kirk, "it is I, Kirk Paulson."

In great surprise Arnold Baxter swung about in all directions, as if expecting his friend to materialize from the surrounding air.

"In heaven's name man, where are you?" he asked.

"Oh, about five thousand miles away," said Kirk, "with Philip Barton, who does not, as is supposed, lie in a watery grave. You must stop this terrible thing you have started."

"But how—how—" sputtered Baxter.

"Never mind how I am communicating with you. It takes too long to explain, but it is by means of an invention of Barton's. I see you and the assembly through an ordinary detectoscope, and I also see that you have no less than fifty volunteers for the bloody work you have proposed. Tell them we are safe—tell the entire audience, and then let me speak to them."

BAXTER pounded for order, and in a few well-chosen words, told them the news. Expressions of disbelief surged through the crowd, and it was some little time before the clamor was silenced. Then the well-known voice of Kirk Paulson swept through the hall and the astounded listeners were compelled to believe.

"Friends," said Kirk, "this mad plan must be abandoned. Philip Barton is alive and he plans a scientific

method of controlling the situation in United North America. The fact that he was not killed in the reported accident to the Inquisitor must be kept in absolute secrecy for a time, and I charge you all not to betray the trust. To prove the truth of my statements, Philip Barton will now speak to you and, through the medium of one of his most remarkable recent inventions, an image of him and of myself will be projected upon this platform. We are not ghosts and the images will be merely light images, having three normal dimensions even after their projection through intervening space."

The far-away audience watched the platform, and listened in strained silence, while Philip worked rapidly to get the apparatus of his projectoscope in operation. In the laboratory of the Inquisitor, the witnesses watched as closely as did their friends in distant New York. Philip and Kirk mounted a small insulated platform, over which was suspended a huge helix of glittering copper ribbon that glowed with a mysterious purple light when a generator started purring in a corner of the laboratory, and numerous vacuum tubes in a wall cabinet lighted up at the touch of Philip's finger to a switch. Two small levers, operating on semi-circular plates graduated in degrees, were manipulated to control the direction of the tube at the top of the tower that had been erected outside the vessel. Philip moved these levers carefully until a circular spot of reddish light appeared on the platform of the distant auditorium. Then he spoke:

"Friends," came his kindly voice, "if you will keep your eyes on the spot of light which has appeared before Arnold Baxter, you will observe the gradual materialization of my image and that of Kirk Paulson. Now!"

He pressed a button at the side of one of the levers and the hum of the generator lowered in pitch as it took the increased load. The watchers at both ends of the circuit gasped as the living images appeared on that platform—hazy at first and weaving about from static interference, they soon developed into clear-cut, substantial reproductions of the two men on the little transmitting table in the Inquisitor's laboratory.

The crowd in the distant meeting hall broke loose, and nothing could restrain their demonstrations for nearly ten minutes. Finally, becoming impatient at the delay, Philip silenced them with a thundering voice, and told them of the importance of their deserting the plan proposed by Baxter, and of their remaining inactive to permit him to carry out his own plans in their behalf. He spoke to them for about fifteen minutes and made arrangements to speak at the same point each evening thereafter, until his activities had brought results. When the projectoscope was switched off and the images of the two men vanished, the din in the hall was terrific and Kirk Paulson gloated over the success of the experiment while Philip changed the adjustments and started a search for Jerome Carter.

"We may rest assured that he is up to some deviltry by this time," he said grimly, as he searched first the offices and then the living quarters of the great man.

It finally occurred to him to search the Administration Building and there, after several ineffectual attempts, he eventually located the secret meeting room, where Carter was in session with his ten lieutenants. The first words heard from that point were the instructions to Alexander DeWolf regarding the pollution of the water supply, and the witnesses on board the Inquisitor paled and gasped their horror at the fiendishness of the plot.

"Great Scott! the man is a far worse rascal than I suspected. We are none too soon."

HE directed Kirk to follow the movements of DeWolf with the detectoscope and set about bringing to the projectoscope platform a crystal sphere of about eighteen inches diameter. This he placed in a cup shaped receptacle, which he set in the center of the platform. Then he returned to the adjusting mechanism of the searching ray.

On the screen they followed DeWolf to the fast air liner, that carried him from Washington to New York in less than fifty minutes. They followed him to his very rooms, where he was seen to sit before his desk and start writing orders to twelve trusted subordinates in the twelve great cities named by Carter. These were written on radiogram blanks and were intended to be delivered in the morning.

"Time to take serious action," said Philip.

He started the projectoscope generator and the crystal sphere glowed with an unholly wavering radiance, that shifted color so rapidly as to set the eyes pulsating with immediate nervous reactions.

"Keep your eyes off that sphere, folks," he ordered.

The controls of the projectoscope were adjusted until a red circle of light appeared on Alexander DeWolf's desk. Then an image of the shimmering sphere itself materialized in that spot and DeWolf sprang back in alarm. But his eyes could not leave that awe-inspiring phenomenon. He seemed drawn to it by some irresistible force, and the watchers saw his eyes dilate in fear as the pupils jerked spasmodically in rhythm with the flickering colors. In less than two minutes he stiffened in his chair to the rigidity of a stone image, eyes wide open and staring.

"Those messages will not go out to-night," laughed Philip. "That was a successful demonstration of long-distance hypnotism. Mr. DeWolf will not awaken until we use our projectoscope on him again—when advisable. Now, let's all get some sleep."

It was an astonished and awed group that broke up a few minutes later and retired to the staterooms of the Inquisitor.

Exploring the Island

NEXT morning Philip awakened with the dawn, and he prepared to sally forth at once to look over their surroundings in daylight, being careful not to awaken Mona as he bathed and dressed.

He found that Kirk had preceded him and was examining the results of their previous night's work on the projectoscope tower. It evidently pleased him in spite of the haste with which it had been accomplished, for he greeted Philip with a broad smile.

"Good morning, Philip," said Kirk. "Are you ready for a check on our friends back home to see what they may be up to in the early morning hours?"

"Not for some time yet, Kirk," was the reply. "You forget that the sun rises here about four and a half hours earlier than in Washington. Our friends of the purple are not accustomed to rising before dawn."

"That's right," admitted Kirk. "And I imagine some of our companions here will not be up and about for an hour or more, either."

"Quite likely," laughed Philip. "At least I'm sure that Mona will not. She was exhausted when we retired last night. In the meantime suppose you and I look over the island a bit. It is three years since I last visited it, and I should like to see what changes, if any, have taken place in that time."

They made their way over the smooth, moss-covered rocks of the extensive plateau on which the Inquisitor rested and soon neared the edge of the cliff which separated them from the remainder of the island. There a wonderful sight met their view, for before

them spread a huge depression, all that remained of the crater of the extinct volcano whose dying activity had thrust the island above the surface of the waves. The sloping walls of the crater were covered with strange vegetation, tropical in character yet lacking in the hugeness and denseness of the jungles of Africa on account of the comparative youth of the undeveloped island. Birds of brilliant hue flitted among the trees and the air was redolent of the odors of virgin forest. From the opposite side of the crater, fully two miles across, there cascaded a waterfall that spilled its sparkling waters down the sloping wall of rock and formed a stream that wound its way through the verdant valley and disappeared among the trees in the lowermost portion of the depression. The skies were cloudless, and the early morning sun already gave promise of a much warmer day than the one they were accustomed to in the uniformly cooled and heated cities of their own country.

"This is back to nature with a vengeance," laughed Kirk. "I have not visited the country in more than ten years, and have seen no growing things since, excepting potted plants and flowers. Let's go down into the valley. I see a natural pathway down the rocks that should not be difficult to follow."

"Better not," said Philip. "We have many things to accomplish to-day, and we might spend several hours down there if we ventured into the valley. I lost myself in that undergrowth three years ago and spent nearly a full day finding my way out."

AS they became absorbed in their contemplation of the beauties of nature there was another of the Inquisitor's passengers who had been awakened by the early morning sun and who was busily preparing to leave the vessel on a mission of curiosity. This was one of Kirk's friends, Aline Sarov, an attractive, Titian-haired miss of twenty, who had spent the past eight years of her life in the confining work of the Synthetic Food Products Corporation. Never in her short and uneventful experience had she been awakened by the cheerful inpouring of the sun's rays through a bedside window. Her every awakening, as far back as memory carried her, had been to the automatic flooding of her small, eight-level room with artificial sunlight supplied over the cables of the Manhattan Power Division at precisely six o'clock. And the real sun, which she had seen but four times in her lifetime, was so much more comforting and pleasant. She reveled in the warmth of the beam that slanted across her room, then, with a sudden accession of exuberant vigor, rushed through the corridors of the Inquisitor and out into the open air.

When she reached the outside she breathed deep of the ocean breeze and could scarce refrain from shouting her happiness aloud. With quick, light steps she made her way across the rocks and soon reached the crater's rim, where the unexpected sight of its suddenly revealed beauties struck her with such force that she stood rooted to the spot for many silent minutes. So absorbed was she in the strangely marvelous view that she did not see the two men, who stood not a hundred feet away, watching her with pleased and kindly understanding.

Finally Kirk called out, "Aline!"

With a startled glance in their direction, the girl flushed and seemed about to return in haste to the Inquisitor.

"Come," called Kirk again. "Come and join us."

"All right," she replied, her momentary embarrassment forgotten. "I thought I was the only early riser on the yacht, so I was a bit surprised by your greeting."

She approached the two men somewhat timidly.

"Good morning," she greeted them, when she reached the spot where they awaited her coming.

"Good morning," returned the two men.

And Philip's keen gray eyes noted the softness of the words, as spoken by Kirk, and the mounting color of the girl as she took the hand of the handsome young man in gray. Sensing the situation at once, he soon made an excuse and returned to the Inquisitor, leaving the two younger people together.

"You look wonderful this morning, Aline," was Kirk's first remark after Philip was out of sight.

"Do I?" she replied innocently. "It must be the invigorating sea air that brings the color to my cheeks."

"No, it is more than that, Aline. You look happy and care free. It is the freedom from the dull monotony of the daily grind."

"Perhaps you are right, Kirk," she agreed solemnly. "I do feel different. I feel as though I were an individual rather than a mere cog in a great machine—a great, purposeless machine. And what is it all about, Kirk? You have promised to explain it all to me, and I am so ignorant and so anxious to learn. Why are our lives as they are?"

Kirk looked tenderly at the sweet face which had once more taken on its customary wistful expression. "It is a long story," he said.

"But we have plenty of time," she said. "Please tell me—Kirk."

"Very well," he agreed. "I'll do my best."

Side by side they sat at the rim of the crater and Kirk unfolded to her eager ears the story of the development of conditions as they had come to exist in United North America.

"The trouble has not become acute until recent years," he began. "In fact, it did not begin to assume serious proportions until after the great war. But it actually began in the dim past—about three centuries ago. At that time the United States of America was the richest nation in the world, even as United North America is at the present time. The world was then recovering from a rather widespread conflict, in which most of the nations had become involved, but of course the effects were as nothing when compared with those of the great war of 2179 to 2191. The foreign nations recovered with comparative rapidity and, in less than twenty years, the war that had then been considered so dreadful became little more than a memory.

"MEANWHILE the wealth of our country continued, and the prosperity of the lower and middle class grew apace. In those days there were three classes, the middle one of which has since disappeared. This was in the early days of industrial development, and what were known as public utilities enjoyed an unprecedented growth. The use of electricity was in its infancy, but growing rapidly, and it was not long before the public utilities became the strongest single factor in the old United States. Serving the public in the matter of light, heat, power and transportation, they were given monopolistic rights by the people, it being a foregone conclusion that the people would be served. There lay the great danger, the danger of the essentials of life falling into the hands of a unified interest. And the public utilities saw to it that unification was accomplished. The monopoly, created by the public, eventually came to prey on the public which created it.

"The utilities formed huge combinations, aided and abetted by the gullible public, and these undertook to control the politics of the people who created them and to dictate the policies of the government. The prosperity of the middle class contributed surely and in-

evitably to the accomplishment of the result, for they soon became of sufficient affluence to dabble in what was known as the stock market. In New York and in other large cities there were trading places where securities and papers representing actual shares in various business enterprises were dealt in. But these trading centers were actually controlled by the moneyed interests, though for a time they allowed the middle and lower classes to profit and to approach, though scarcely ever reach, the independence of wealth.

"It was all a clever scheme in the minds of a few great financial wizards, you see. The period of intense public interest in speculation continued for many years, and the combinations and mergers of great industrial and public utility interests increased by leaps and bounds. Executives and officials of the great corporations formed "investment trusts," wherein they pooled their vast holding of the stocks of varied corporations, with the intention of preventing the collapse of prices and still enabling the individual to "cash in" on their paper profits. The public continued to buy and buy, and, in order to gratify their anxiety to amass riches for themselves, their savings were withdrawn from the banks in ever-increasing amounts and eventually found their way into the coffers of the unified industries and utilities. The collapse of the banking system followed.

"Then came the collapse of the stock market and the poor, misguided public saw their paper profits dwindle and disappear under the onslaughts of the professional manipulators of the market. After their supposed profits had gone, their actual savings followed, and, within a very short time, the middle and lower classes were without funds, and the upper class was in possession of almost all of the tangible wealth of the nation. The crushing of the National Banks and the Federal Reserve was not so easy, as this could not be accomplished without "legislation. But this proved to be no great stumbling block to the great financial minds, for they had by this time become so very powerful and influential that they were enabled to force through Congress almost any legislation they desired.

"Gold had been used for many years as a basis for the monetary system. This also was done away with when the banking system was disrupted. Further legislation was enacted and the government mints were closed down, the coining of gold, silver, nickel and copper being discontinued. The paper money of the government, which had previously been issued against reserves of gold and silver, went the way of the bank notes, which had lost their value with the collapse of the banking system, and the country came into the complete control of the industries and utilities. Their paper became the medium of exchange, and the security for this paper was the actual plants and properties of the corporations."

"BUT," objected Aline, "the President and the members of Congress are elected by the people. If the public saw all of this coming, why did they not prevent it by electing government officials who could not be influenced nor subsidized by the corporations?"

"Because," explained Kirk, "they pulled the wool over the eyes of the people in those days even as they have done in our own time. But they were devilishly clever, and in their justice he it said that for more than two centuries conditions under their rule were far better than they had been previously. For a time, of course, there was chaos, and from it emerged a new order of things. Those of the middle class who had lost their all dropped in status to a class in some cases lower than the low. Those few who had managed

to retain some of their profits were elevated to the fringe of the upper class. The middle class as such was gone. And, with the re-stabilizing of exchange by the new system of the industries and utilities, the first step of the great leaders was to alleviate conditions in the lower classes and to thereby obtain their everlasting gratitude. In the furtherance of their own designs, it was necessary to use the working class, and the working class was made to benefit in direct ratio to its willingness and ability. Those of education and ability were quickly elevated to higher stations in life and the entire level was raised. There was less work than ever for everyone and the standard of living improved until all were enjoying more of the luxuries and comforts of life than they had ever known before. The advance of science contributed greatly to this, and the invention of new labor-saving devices and the ultimate complete electrification of the entire nation lightened the labors of all. Of course the few great men at the heads of the vast corporations were in possession of practically all of the actual wealth, but who cared? The actual machinery of the government was running more smoothly than ever before. Each worker found that his own comforts and rewards could be increased by increased effort and more especially by improvement of his or her own education. There being little need for heavy manual labor, a premium was placed upon the possession of knowledge and education, and the entire populace benefitted greatly.

"The increase of scientific knowledge led to an age of invention, and this conspired to bring about the concentration of population in the great cities and the abandonment of the farms and smaller communities. Necessity called for the provision of synthetic substitutes for farm products, and these were forthcoming. The breeding and raising of livestock became almost impossible on account of the turning of the youth of the country to the cities. Synthetic substitutes for meat were forthcoming. With the increase in knowledge of the requirements of the human body and the knowledge of the important part played by the various vitamins, this was a simple matter, for vitamins can be produced synthetically as you know from your own work. Proper combinations of the required vitamins produced in palatable form have been our daily sustenance for two centuries now, and statistics show that our race was, until after the great war, stronger and healthier than ever before in its history."

Aline corrugated her brow in growing perplexity. "If conditions were so ideal for generations and generations under the new order of things, why have they changed so radically since the great war?" she asked.

"That is another matter," he replied. "As long as the men at the head of the eleven essential corporations were good men and had as their first concern the good of mankind in general and of their countrymen in particular, all was well. But the soft living of those of the purple gradually altered their viewpoints. They slowly degenerated, both mentally and morally. Brains were easy to purchase, too easy in fact. Trusted lieutenants took over the more arduous duties and left their masters to lives of ease and indulgence. And these lieutenants were placed in positions of power and authority, though their every vital policy was dictated by the master mind. And, with the degeneration of the master minds, the policies became less and less favorable to the wearers of the gray."

"Then came the great war. The nations of Europe became embroiled in a conflict the like of which had never been conceived in the minds of the most pessimistic of the calamity howlers. Their orders for munitions, chemicals, supplies, poured into our country and their riches followed in payment. The master minds

recovered from their lethargy. Vast profits were to be made from the misfortunes which had come to Europe. The labors of the workers in gray increased apace. China and Japan became involved. The colonies of Great Britain were depopulated to feed the maw of the monster—super-scientific war—as were the colonies of the other great powers. The wealth of the United States doubled, trebled. Three billions of our fellow men had perished and still our people did not interfere. Having become a self-contained nation and entirely independent of imports of commodities, it was not necessary to protect ourselves in foreign countries. The entire world was at war—nations were brutally exterminating each other by scientific means—whole armies were wiped out at a single blast of electronic energy. Finally, when the combatants were exhausted and almost defenseless, we stepped in with an army of twenty million. It was difficult to determine just which side we were on, but we put an end to the great war—to the rest of the world, almost. A second army of twenty million followed and the job was completed. Our loss in man power totaled fifteen millions. Our loss in riches was enormous—on paper. But we held paper from the rest of the civilized world that mortgaged its future to us for a century or more.

"Then there returned twenty-five millions of young men and women to our shores. They had spent from one to four years in war-torn Europe and Asia. Their outlook on life was changed. They were not content to return to the gray, and it behooved those of the purple to take action. Canada had been turned over to us in part payment of Great Britain's war debts, and the returned warriors were sent to its great depopulated cities to start the work of rehabilitation that has been so successfully carried out.

"BUT things changed rapidly now. Jerome Carter was a young man, but he had inherited from his father and uncles the control of the corporate wealth of three families, and this total represented more than two-thirds the wealth of the nation. This man, Jerome Carter, hated the gray multitude. He possessed great force of will, and soon obtained complete mastery over the other ten greatest magnates of the newly formed United North America. Within ten years he was virtual dictator of the new Republic, and he had taken the last vestige of independence from the wearers of the gray. By his control of the President and of Congress, he caused the enactment of legislation which took education entirely from the lower levels of our cities. That is why you have been kept in ignorance of science, history and all knowledge, excepting that necessary to fit you for an individual task that was assigned to you by the Government before you were born. That is why we traffic surreptitiously in books in our lower levels, and that is why the red police have been built up into a great organization fostered by the minions of Jerome Carter.

"As a parallel to the complete subsidy of the government and the degradation of the multitude in gray, Jerome Carter has kept Europe and Asia and the colonies of the former great powers of those continents from recovering from the effects of the great war. With their future mortgaged to his puppets, they will never reach economic independence, since their labor is all expended in wrestling from the battle-scarred ground the minerals and chemicals which constitute almost their sole source of wealth and which is the sole medium they have in which to pay their debts."

"Terrible, terrible," exclaimed Aline, whose eyes had remained wonder-wide during the long recital. "And the change is to be accomplished by you and Mr. Barton?"

"Mostly by Philip," he replied, "and, I imagine, mostly from this island."

A cheerful hail from the direction of the Inquisitor reached their ears.

"Breakfast, folks!" came the cheery voice of Mona Barton.

"I'm hungry," smiled Aline.

"Me too," said Kirk, lifting her gaily to her feet.

The ensuing foot-race brought them up, flushed and panting, at the entrance to the vessel. The final sprint to the breakfast table was made in record time.

Some Fiendish Action Curbed

IMMEDIATELY following the morning meal, Philip and Kirk repaired to the laboratory, where they busied themselves with certain experiments which had been interrupted by the carrying out of the banishment decree. It was in the results of these experiments that Philip hoped for the perfection of means whereby the complete domination of the situation in United North America could be effected. The remainder of the party set forth from the Inquisitor to explore the island which had given them temporary refuge from the intolerable conditions to which they were accustomed.

Mona Barton and Aline Sarov grew to be fast friends in a very short time, and the morning was not yet half gone when the little girl in gray confided to her new-found friend of the purple her hopes of future happiness with the masterful Kirk Paulson at her side.

Jack Sterns, with the true adventurous spirit of the experienced air pilot, set forth with Tom Easton and a number of Kirk's followers to descend into the crater and examine at close hand the wonders of nature that presented so inviting an appearance when viewed from above.

Philip and Kirk labored incessantly with the mechanism of the strange instruments they were assembling. It was well after midday before they found opportunity to rest, and it had been necessary to place the refrigerating apparatus of the Inquisitor in service on account of the great heating effect of the blazing tropical sun which shone with all its fury on the metal hull of the vessel.

It was with a tired sigh that Philip looked up from his work and observed the lateness of the hour.

"Kirk," he said, "it is about time we cast an eye about in New York and Washington. Carter's gang must be watched closely."

"No question of that, Philip," agreed Kirk. "And it is after eight o'clock by Eastern Standard Time."

The detectoscope was placed in operation and, since its adjustments had not been changed since the preceding evening, the view of Alexander DeWolf's luxurious library appeared on the screen at once. The figure of the water supply magnate was in the identical rigid position in which they last saw it, the partly finished radiograms of the night before lying before him in the same disorder.

"That is certainly complete hypnosis," said Kirk.

"Yes," replied Philip, "but it is only mechanically induced, and we have no control over the man's movements or actions, other than the mere imposition of the trance-like state. This will avail us little if we are not successful with the revolutionary experiment on which we are working."

"You have not given up hope?" asked Kirk.

"No," was the hesitant reply, "but there is something I cannot seem to overcome. Some little thing perhaps, but it has so far proved elusive. And we have little time to lose. Heaven knows what Carter's

next move will be when he discovers that his orders to DeWolf have not been carried out."

"Look!" exclaimed Kirk, glancing at the screen, "Someone is entering the room."

A portly little man in gray came in hurriedly and, as he approached the desk of the financier, they saw the narrow purple band about his left sleeve that indicated his attachment to the household in the capacity of valet. The look of astonishment that spread over the little man's features when he saw the rigid form of his master was ludicrous in the extreme, and Philip switched on the detectophone attachment, so they could listen to his comments.

"Great grief!" spoke the agitated voice of the servant. "What's come over the old boy?"

An experimental forefinger pressed to the flabby portion of DeWolf's jaw, and the little man almost tumbled over backward in his alarm.

"He's stiff, so he is," he gasped. "Dead, that's what he is. Help! Help!"

The pudgy little man was genuinely distressed, but Philip and Kirk could not repress their laughter at his flustered alarm. The excitable valet now rushed to a bell cord, and, at his nervous but vigorous pulling on its tasseled end, the clangor of the alarm was heard pealing through the adjoining rooms that were not visible in the screen.

"THIS is as good as a show," laughed Kirk as a motley crowd of servants rushed into the room. Some were attired in the familiar gray with the narrow stripes of purple indicating their positions. Others were scantily dressed and of disheveled appearance. All were greatly excited at sight of their master in his unnatural position.

"No, Jennis," spoke one of the braver of the men as he pressed a finger on the pulse of his master. "He ain't dead. It's a stroke of some kind he's got. Get the doctor."

The ensuing confusion proved entertaining in the extreme, and the laughter of the two unsuspected witnesses soon brought several members of the Inquisitor's party to the laboratory. The coming of meal time had brought most of them back to the vessel, and the coolness of its interior was a welcome relief from the sweltering and unaccustomed heat of the outside.

A secretary in purple had now arrived on the scene and he quickly took charge of the situation. His first radiovision call was for DeWolf's physicians and the second for Jerome Carter. At the appearance of Carter's visage in the imaged disk of the distant radiovision instrument, one of Kirk's followers growled out an expression of rage and hate.

"Hush," said Philip.

THE officious and acid-tongued secretary was hustling the servants from the room, and the witnesses watched in silence as he closed the door and tip-toed back to the side of the rigid figure. Observing the array of disordered papers, he picked one of the blanks from the desk and scanned its contents. He whistled in surprise and hastily gathered together the remaining papers and stuffed them into a compartment of the desk. The physicians soon arrived and their mystification over the condition of the patient brought smiles and chuckles from the watchers in the laboratory of the Inquisitor.

A consultation ensued, and when Carter arrived and learned the state of affairs he grew purple with rage.

"You confounded medical men!" he stormed. "Of what use is your knowledge, I'd like to know? Here is one of our greatest men, a victim of some sort of an attack, and you can't even diagnose the case. He had

important work to do, and I presume it is still undone."

"If you refer to the radiograms," said the secretary, "they were not sent."

"Where—where are they?" sputtered Carter.

The secretary produced the sheaf and Carter grasped them and, after reading the first, carefully transferred the lot to an inside pocket.

"You will, of course, not speak of these," he remarked to the secretary.

"Of course not," was the response.

And Carter, his cheeks a bit paler than was their wont, stamped from the room without further converse with the physicians.

"We must follow him," said Philip hurriedly. "It will be necessary to watch his every move for a time."

Adjustments of the apparatus kept him in view throughout the speedy journey to his headquarters office on his private pneumatic tube car, which proved extremely difficult for Barton to keep in focus. Carter entered his own office in high dudgeon and rang for his secretary at once.

"Call an immediate meeting of the council," he thundered. "All except DeWolf—he's ill."

"Very well, sir," responded the secretary, proceeding to the radiovision instrument to carry out the order.

"Confound it!" growled Carter, glancing over the papers reposing on his desk. "Nothing done whatsoever. We'll have the rats from below stirring up trouble in no time."

He paced the floor impatiently as, one by one, the members of the council were notified. By the time the first arrivals began to appear, he was in a towering rage, and he herded them into the nearby council chamber like so much cattle.

"Gentlemen," he roared when all had assembled, "my orders of last night to DeWolf were not carried out, and we are in no better, quite probably in worse condition than yesterday."

"DeWolf refused?" asked one of the members hopefully.

"Refuse? He wouldn't dare!" shouted Carter. "No. He was overcome by some sort of a stroke and is still unconscious. But our indulgence in sympathy for him will do us no good. Another move must be planned and at once."

A HEATED discussion followed, and the listeners on board the Inquisitor were horrified at some of the blood-curdling suggestions offered by those present at the meeting. These men appeared to be entirely devoid of conscience where the gray-clad multitude was concerned. They spoke of wholesale slaughter of millions of their less fortunate fellow men as callously as they would have spoken of the destruction of vermin. But it was evident that the dominance of Jerome Carter was responsible. The others were of innately softer nature, but were transformed, into the beasts they appeared to be, by sheer force of his brutal will.

When they finally decided on a nation-wide round-up of millions of the workers by the red police, who had orders to shoot to kill, Philip came to the conclusion that it was time for drastic action.

"Folks," he said, "this decision means civil war back home. The workers will resist and the carnage will be dreadful. If we allow this to take place, it will be too late to save our country, and all our efforts thus far will have been of no avail. I am entirely against bloodshed—even in the case of Jerome Carter—and I had hoped to settle the great difficulty once and for all by beneficial scientific means. But I have thus far not

achieved success in the experiments along these lines, and to gain time for the continuance of the investigation that may lead to the desired means, I am going to put Carter and his entire council in the hypnotic state in which DeWolf now lies. They can live for a month if necessary, as the physicians will be able to continue nourishment of the helpless bodies. But Carter will be unable to plot harm of the serious nature now proposed, and Kirk and I shall have time to work."

The crystal sphere still reposed on the projectoscope platform, and it was the work of a moment to start the apparatus that induced its eerie, shimmering radiance. With strict orders to his companions to look away from the ball, Philip turned to the screen of the detelescope and coupled to its mechanism the energy of the projecting apparatus. With the appearance of the dim red spot in the center of the table in that distant council chamber, Jerome Carter stopped short in his final tirade and gazed unbelievably at what he saw. When the blinking brilliance of the sphere materialized before the startled eyes of the group, there were cries of surprise and fear. Carter jerked himself to his feet and tried to draw back from the table, but it was too late. Already had the powerful influence of the ghostly image asserted itself, and his eyes widened in terror as the eye-balls twitched and rolled in rhythm with the flickerings of the unearthly, weaving light. When he saw his companions stiffening to immobility under the baneful influence, he struggled against it, with all the strength of his mighty will. By sheer force of that will which had controlled the destinies of a great continent for many a year, he edged an inch or two from the table. Beads of perspiration rolled from his forehead and the cords of his neck stood forth like taut steel cables. For a moment it seemed that he would triumph, and Philip increased the power. With a shuddering groan Carter gave up the battle, and his body, stiffened like a statue as he stood on his feet, toppled to the floor with a crash that brought the secretaries from an adjoining room to the door with a rush.

"That's that," said Philip, touching a button that caused the view of the startled assistants to fade from the screen. "Now we can dine."

* * * * *

AN hour later, with Jack and Tom recruited as assistants, Philip and Kirk resumed their labors in the laboratory. They were safe as far as any danger of further activities of Carter were concerned, but haste was considered essential on account of the uncertainties that would develop in the essential industries and the resulting hardships that might be imposed on the multitude in gray, through the mere disorganizing effect of the strange happenings in Carter's council.

Late in the afternoon the men rested from their labors, and contact was obtained with President Haven through the medium of the detelescope and its auxiliary instruments. His face was wreathed in smiles as he greeted the voice of Philip when it first reached him.

"My boy," he said, "I'll warrant this astounding affliction which has come to Jerome Carter and his council is some of your doing."

"Yes, it is," said Philip. "Is there any suspicion?"

"Not that I know of, though I have no doubt that those of the lower levels have some private opinions in the matter. But the newsspeakers have blared forth bulletins all morning, and the mystery of the thing has taken the public's fancy. The physicians are unable to help them at all. What have you done?"

"By means of an invention of mine, they have all been cast into a coma from which it will be impossible to revive them without my intervention. But they will remain unharmed as long as they are kept supplied with food and drink. The doctors know how to accomplish this, so there will be no danger whatever. It had to be done when I detected them in a nefarious plot to spread riot and bloodshed through the lower levels."

"How long will you keep them in this state?"

"Until I am assured of the success or failure of an experiment I am now making, the success of which will change the entire condition now existing in our country. I can tell you no more now. Meanwhile we'll leave Carter and his lieutenants asleep, and allow the public to conjecture as it pleases."

"Good word, Philip," approved the President. "Is Mona well?"

"Never better, Dad. I'll let her speak with you and the rest of the folks later."

They took their farewells, and the four men resumed their work in the laboratory, with many a chuckle at thought of the mystification of the great medical men and of the excitement of the news announcers and the puzzlement of the general public.

An Unexpected Blow

RANDALL HAINES was an exceedingly clever Secret Service officer, and his alert brain was aroused to unusual activity by the news of the strange and unprecedented illness which had attacked Jerome Carter and his associates. He turned the problem over and over in his mind, and, for some unaccountable reason, could not keep his thoughts from associating Philip Barton with the bizarre occurrence. But Philip Barton was dead. He had, with his own eyes, seen the Inquisitor plunge beneath the tossing waves of the Atlantic. Barton's vessel had not reappeared, and the locating later of the packing case which floated to the surface seemed certain proof.

But was it? Philip Barton was infernally clever, he reasoned, and it was just possible that by some means he had staged a fake accident and in some manner escaped. President Haven did not seem to be taking the loss of his daughter as much to heart as might be expected, though the family had taken to mourning and was rarely seen in public.

Try as he might he could not rid his mind of the suspicion that, somehow, somewhere, Philip Barton was still in the land of the living, and that by the use of some secret invention of his, he had accomplished the impossible and caused the striking down of Jerome Carter and his council. If this were the case, it was a clear-cut job for the Secret Service, and Randall Haines needed no authority to proceed against Barton at his own discretion.

Without consulting any of his men, he made a secret trip to the executive mansion. He was passed by the guards without question, since they were men of his own force, and soon found a hiding place behind heavy drapes in Haven's own dining-room. Patiently he waited through the long period when the servants were engaged in the setting of the table for the evening meal. There were to be no guests, he deduced from the number of places set, and he gloated over the fact, for this assured him that Haven would talk freely with his family.

When the President entered the room with Mrs. Haven on his arm, Haines scrutinized their features carefully from his hiding place. The calm dignity of Haven's face gave him no clue, nor did the quiet reserve of the first lady of the land. But when the

youngest daughter entered, she was playfully jesting with the brother, Ross junior, and his suspicions were immediately aroused.

The first course having been served, the President addressed his butler, who stood conveniently close to his high-backed chair. "Parker," he said, "you may leave the room until I ring. We have private affairs to discuss."

Haines hugged himself in anticipation as the butler left, and, at the first words of the President, he gloated inwardly at the confirmation of his suspicions.

"Philip talked with me to-day," was his quiet statement.

"He did?" replied Mrs. Haven joyfully. "Are they all right?"

"Yes. And he is going to talk with us later and let us speak with Mona through this marvelous invention of his, that requires neither transmitter nor receiver at our end of the ether circuit."

Frances and her brother jabbered excited comments until it was necessary for their father to reprove them.

"Please allow me to continue," he said. "It will be of much interest to all of you to know that Philip is responsible for the strange illness of Carter and his associates. But you must not speak of this to anyone."

"How on earth did he do it, father?" asked the son.

"I have not the slightest idea," was the response, "but we may learn more from him this evening."

RANDALL HAINES had heard more than enough and he withdrew from his position, cautiously proceeding through the darkness of the adjoining sun-room, until he reached the passage which connected with the main entrance to the apartments. He encountered none of the servants and was passed from the entrance by one of his own men, to whom he gave orders of silence and a warning that he would return within an hour.

With all possible speed he hurried to the storerooms of the department, where he searched rapidly for an instrument he had not used for years, a portable direction finder. He had some little difficulty in locating it, but finally emerged triumphant with a small black box under his arm. It was a short trip back to the executive living apartments, but the public car in the pneumatic tube seemed abnormally slow. When he greeted the operative at the entrance, it lacked just five minutes of the hour he had mentioned.

Sensing that something of importance was afoot, the operative had kept tabs on the movements of the President and his family, and he advised his superior that they were in the drawing-room. He further assisted him by pointing out a circuitous route to a small room, from which Haines could observe and listen with complete safety.

This proved to be an alcove separated from the drawing-room by portieres similar to those behind which he had secreted himself at dinner time. It was dimly illuminated by a small amount of light that filtered between the drapes from the larger room and it was the matter of but a minute to set up the instrument he had brought and to get it in operating position. Then he sat quietly by, listening to the desultory conversation of the Havens and awaiting his chance of checking up on Barton.

All unsuspecting Haines' espionage, the Haven family discussed the matter in detail, even mentioning the fact that Philip and Mona were on an island in the Atlantic Ocean. Of course, they themselves had no knowledge of its location, but the direction finder would solve that. They spoke of the presence of Kirk Paul-

son and his companions with the exiles, who had supposedly been lost at sea. Haines congratulated himself more and more on his astuteness and on the coup he now saw he could make. His thoughts of the rewards that would be his when Jerome Carter recovered and learned of his invaluable services proved so alluring that he lost himself in contemplation of the honor and wealth that would come to him thereby. So engrossed was he in his own day dreams, that he lost much of the conversation in the next room, and he was startled from his reverie by the sudden realization that Philip Barton's voice had joined those of the President's family.

"Why, yes, Dad," were the first words that impressed him, "Mona is right here."

"Hello, folks," then came the voice of the eldest daughter.

Randall Haines was forced to admire the inventive genius of the man who had made this perfect two-way conversation possible through the ether with apparatus functioning at only one end of the circuit. But he did not delay in getting his direction finder in operation, and he soon had seven readings that checked within a small fraction of a degree with each other. This work completed, he listened to the remainder of the conversation, but it was entirely of a personal nature, and he learned nothing more of value. He made his way out the same way he had entered and was soon on his way to his own offices, where he planned to spend the night in preparation for an expedition against Barton.

His first move on reaching his office was to get out a large chart and to plot thereon the course indicated by the readings of his direction finder. To his surprise, this missed the coasts of both South America and Africa, extending into the Antarctic in a southeasterly direction, missing all charted islands on its way, the nearest to the line being Ascension and St. Helena islands.

"That is peculiar," he said to himself. They distinctly said that Barton was on some distant island. I must ask the advice of Paul Ott. He is an authority on geography."

He soon had his friend on the radio and asked him to visit him at once in his office. This request being acceded to, he loafed in his chair, puffing vigorously at his old black pipe, and turning over in his mind a plan to set forth in the morning to locate and arrest Barton and his party.

When Paul Ott arrived, the two men bent over the chart, and the newcomer followed with his finger the penciled line that Haines had traced on it.

"Why," said his friend, when his finger reached a point almost directly south of Ascension Island, "if you are looking for an island on this course, there is one just about here."

"But it is uncharted," objected Haines.

"I know it is. It is unnamed, too. But, in the year 2172, a pilot on one of the Cape Town-to-Pernambuco air lines observed a seething in the ocean below his vessel at this point and slowed down to investigate. An island of considerable size had been pushed above the surface by subterranean volcanic action, and the internal fires were being extinguished by the impouring of the ocean. The spectacle proved to be so stupendous and awe-inspiring that the vessel was delayed two hours by requests of the passengers, who wanted to remain to watch this exhibition of nature's creative handiwork."

"But would this island be habitable now?" asked Haines.

"Undoubtedly," replied his friend. "It was visited by explorers several times before the great war and was reported as having cooled off. However, the war pre-

vented further visits, and there have been no later ones that I know of on account of the conditions that have since existed in world relations. But by this time it should be covered with vegetation and, though its climate is likely to be quite hot, it should not be a bad place for adventurous humans to find a place of refuge."

"Eureka!" cried Randall Haines. "The very place that a man of Barton's caliber would choose. He, of all men, has probably visited this island before, and I'll wager my next month's credit that we shall find him there."

* * * *

At daybreak the following day a sleek, speedy patrol ship of the Secret Service took the air, and in it were Randall Haines and twenty picked men of the service. Being a captain and having great discretionary powers, he was enabled to set forth on this expedition without consulting his superiors, and was thus able to keep his mission an entire secret. And his elation at the opportunity of obtaining a new feather for his cap was unbounded.

Hour after hour the helmsman kept to the course prescribed by Haines and, after six hours of travel at high altitude, the patrol ship neared the island on which Barton and his little group had taken refuge.

"Here we are," exulted Haines as he made out the tiny speck on the surface of the ocean which marked the position of the unnamed island. "That's Barton's Island below."

And the name was to attach itself permanently to the small body of land and was to become famous in history.

The patrol vessel slowly circled about, dropping gradually from its great altitude until within a thousand feet of the shiny bulk of the Inquisitor. Randall Haines could scarcely contain himself with joy at sight of the yacht, and he instructed his pilot to make as quick a landing as possible. His ship was thus brought to a sudden, somewhat jarring stop on the surface of the rocky plateau only a few hundred feet from the Inquisitor. He was the first to step from his vessel, and his men followed in haste with their weapons, ready and prepared for any emergency.

But there was no sign of life from Barton's vessel, and Haines and his men advanced cautiously toward its open door. When they were within fifty feet of the entrance there was a shout from behind, and Haines wheeled in his tracks to observe a party of about ten men and women, two of them in purple, the rest in gray. This party was advancing from the direction of the crater and its members were unarmed as far as could be seen.

"Halt!" shouted Haines, menacing the leader with his hand weapon, which was capable of firing either explosive bullets or the expanding flexible binders that were used for capturing a victim and rendering him helpless without serious injury.

Tom Easton advanced a step and Haines recognized him at once.

"Easton," he ordered, "remain where you stand. I arrest you all in the name of the law. Tell your companions to throw down any weapons they may have."

"We have none," replied Tom haughtily, "and the law of United North America does not reach to this island."

"Oh, yes it does, Easton," said Haines. "I have taken formal possession of it in the name of our Government. This island is unclaimed by other powers."

From the corner of his eye Tom Easton observed that Kirk Paulson watched the proceedings from the door of the Inquisitor for a moment, then withdrew hastily to the interior.

"All right, Haines," he said quietly, "we surrender."

"Where's Barton?" asked his captor.

"Somewhere about the island," answered Tom evasively. "We surrender, but don't think for a minute that we'll aid you in locating and capturing our leader."

One of the girls in gray started sobbing and Jack Sterns stepped to her side to comfort her.

"Keep your places now," ordered Haines. Then to his men: "Bind them, boys."

His men advanced on the group and, despite some little struggling on the part of the men, soon had the entire party bound hand and foot and seated on the hard rocks. Tom Easton, suspecting that Jack Sterns was about to let loose on their captors with some of the strongest words in his vocabulary, hissed in his ear and managed to convey to him the knowledge that those within the Inquisitor were aware of the state of affairs. The news somehow passed throughout the group, and all of the captives remained quiet, giving the appearance of submitting with humility.

* * * * *

IN the laboratory of the Inquisitor were the remaining members of the Barton party, Philip and Kirk having been at work on the mysterious experiment on which so much depended. Aline and Mona had been assisting also, though their help consisted mostly of passing sprightly comments, which in nowise bothered the workers. When Kirk returned from his visit to the entrance door and advised them of the coming of the patrol ship and the capture of the other members of their party, there was consternation for a moment. Then Philip burst forth:

"Randall Haines!" he exclaimed. "Confound him for his spying. He has located us with a direction finder as sure as you are alive. But we'll fix him!"

He rushed to the projectoscope and replaced on its platform the crystal sphere which had been removed during some of their experiments. The apparatus was soon in operation and, at the screen of the detoscopes, Philip rapidly manipulated the controls until he had a view of the immediate outside. Randall Haines and his entire party had turned toward the Inquisitor and were advancing in close formation to its entrance. Not a moment too soon the image of the sphere materialized at the very doorstep of the vessel, and Haines drew back in alarm as his eyes were smitten by its dazzling colors, twinkling with vivid brilliancy even in the bright sunlight.

"What devilment is this?" ejaculated the captain of the Secret Service squad in alarm.

Philip increased the power rapidly and, in a few seconds, his enemies were stretched lifeless on the ground. A great cheer was raised by the prisoners, and Mona and Aline hugged each other in their glee. Philip and Kirk rushed to the outside, followed by the two women.

It was the work of but a few minutes to release the captives, and then Philip turned his attention to the lifeless forms of their enemies.

"Some fine material for our experiments," he commented, "especially Haines. Let us carry them inside."

The twenty men who had accompanied Haines on the trip to the island were carried to beds in various state-rooms of the Inquisitor and there left to remain in their stupor until Philip chose to release them. But Randall Haines was carried to the laboratory and his body was straightened to a prone position on the operating table.

"Philip," said Mona, "you're not going to hurt him?"

"No indeed, dear," replied her spouse. "If my experiment works, I am going to make a good citizen of him. If it does not, he will not be harmed."

A small replica of the projectoscope tower that had been erected alongside the Inquisitor was wheeled to

the end of the operating table and its short tube was swung around on the trunnions until the blunt end was directed toward the back of Haines' head.

The apparatus on which they had been working was hastily looked over and, at a nod of approval from Philip, Kirk connected a pair of cables from the jumble of instruments on the long table to the end of the projectoscope tube opposite the subject. A small motor-generator hummed merrily beneath the table at a touch of a switch, and the row of vacuum tubes along the wall lighted with their purple glow. A series of black-and-white keys like those of a piano were arranged beside the condensers and inductances that were massed before the lighted tubes, and Philip ran his fingers experimentally along these. In swift alternation the vacuum tubes responded with flashes of increased brilliancy.

"Okay, Kirk," he said, and Kirk pulled the switch that set the air of the entire room vibrating with the high frequency waves emitted from that harmless-appearing tube that was trained on the recumbent figure of Randall Haines. An aura surrounded the head of the subject, a hazy purplish light that hid his shock of curly black hair in a weird mist.

There was a cross-section chart of a human brain on the wall near the instrument and many notations had been made opposite various sections of the pictured gray matter. Philip scanned this chart closely as he ran his fingers over the piano-like keys. The vibrating air of the laboratory changed its rate continuously with throbbing pulsations that followed the movements of Philip's careful fingers. All those in the room watched in breathless wonder as Philip seemed like one inspired. Then he ceased his movements and turned to the subject with a thoughtful look in his eyes. Glancing once more at the chart, he pulled the switch and, with the resulting slowing down of the motor-generator, complete silence fell in the laboratory. The cessation of the throbbing pulsations, which had set the ear-drums of the watchers singing, left a queer echoing silence that left them all mute. The still figure on the operating table remained as rigid as before.

"All finished," said Philip solemnly. "Now we'll awaken him and learn whether we were successful or not."

A Successful Operation

PHILIP placed a stethoscope on Haines' breast and listened intently for a moment, then smiled his satisfaction.

"Heart perfectly normal," he said.

"But what do you hope has been accomplished in this experiment?" asked Jack Sterns.

The remainder of the group hung on Philip's words as he replied.

"Jack," he said, "and I might as well tell the rest of you, now that I think I have been successful, it is my belief that we have just altered the brain of Randall Haines in those portions controlling his sense of values of right and wrong, his conscience, and his morals. It has been known for centuries that, in a person of criminal tendencies, there is an abnormality of the brain. It has thus been customary to perform surgical operations on these diseased brains and thereby restore the criminal to normality and transform him into a useful citizen. But these operations have always been performed by actually cutting into certain portions of the brain and removing irritating objects, abscesses and the like, and in no cases have they been performed on other than actual criminals or insane persons. My

invention, which I shall call the psycho-converter, is intended to perform such operations bloodlessly and painlessly by subjecting the involved portions of the brain to the action of high frequency electrical vibrations of a healing and vitalizing nature. These rays penetrate like the X-ray and, by setting the brain cells in rapid oscillation, can produce complete changes of their structure and functions. If we are successful, we shall find that Randall Haines is an entirely different person when he returns to consciousness."

"Wonderful! Astounding! Revolutionary!" were the comments that greeted this announcement, and the entire party gathered closely about the operating table to observe the next move to be made by the great inventor.

"Stand back a bit, folks," warned Philip. "If this thing is not a success, you may come to personal harm when he awakens. And it is a very simple matter to bring him around."

The group drew back a few feet and Philip wheeled to the side of the operating table a small stand on which there was mounted a small glass bulb with several projections to which wires were attached in much the same manner as on an X-ray tube. This was adjusted so that the surface of the cathode presented an angle of forty-five degree to the head of the patient, and when Philip set its energizer working, there was a slight crackling sound from the vicinity of the tube, but no visible rays emanated from it.

RANDALL HAINES stirred slightly, then opened one eye at a time and looked dazedly at the white ceiling overhead. Suddenly he sat erect with a quick, inquiring glance about the room. He peered into the eyes of his erstwhile enemy, Philip Barton, and his face was wreathed in a friendly smile.

"Barton," he said, "I have been entirely wrong in making this trip to capture you. In fact, I have been wrong for years in my feeling toward you. If you can forgive me, I wish you would give me your hand."

"Gladly," said Philip, extending his hand and gripping that of Haines in a friendly squeeze. "How do you feel, old man?"

"Great!" replied Haines, springing from the table to the floor and surveying the astounded group. "Never felt better in my life, Barton. But what on earth have you done to me?"

Philip smiled enigmatically. "I'm sorry, old man; it was necessary to hypnotize you and your followers in self-defense," he said. "But I am glad you are taking it in this manner."

Haines looked puzzled for a moment. "Perfectly all right," he said. "You did the only thing you could do humanely. You should have handled us far more roughly. But I can't understand whatever possessed me to persecute you all these years and to embark on this foolhardy expedition. Why—why—I must have been crazy. And Carter—Jerome Carter—how could I have adhered to him for so long? At last I have come to my senses, and I swear I shall make things up to you."

Philip glanced in the direction of his friends with a distinctly warning look. They understood that they were to say nothing.

Then Randall Haines laughed aloud. "Then this is the same thing you did to Carter and his council?" he asked.

"Yes," grinned Philip, "and I'll awaken them all in good time. Meanwhile we should awaken your companions. Can you guarantee their friendliness to my followers?"

"Absolutely," said Haines. "They will obey my or-

ders implicitly, and I'll confess my error and call them off at once."

Haines' men were brought singly to the operating table and individually subjected to the action of the resuscitation tube. In the case of each man a few words were spoken in private by Haines and instructions given regarding their future conduct toward Barton and his party. When the last man was restored to normal, their leader gave them a talk concerning the action that had been taken by Barton against Carter and the members of his council. Philip and his friend exchanged wondering glances at the evidence of so complete a change in the attitude of Randall Haines. He had actually become a champion of the cause of the gray-clad multitude and held forth in much the manner of one of their own number at home, with the exception that he spoke even more boldly. And his change of heart toward the dictator was a revelation. He swore that he would devote every effort toward assisting in the rehabilitation of the Republic of United North America as a true republic and in the overthrow of the dictatorship of Carter.

When he had finished, his men expressed their amazement in no uncertain terms, but agreed that there was much in what he had said, and that they would support any action that promised success, since they believed that his words were frank statements of truth. That some of them were thinkers was evident from comments they made, but it was equally evident that they shared the general lackadaisical viewpoint of the wearers of the purple and were, on general principles, content to let things remain as they were, provided they themselves continued in their present positions of favor with the power behind the administration. It was, however, clear to all that they were cognizant of the injustice of existing conditions and would prove friendly to the wearers of the gray, provided the power of Carter and his council was in some manner overcome.

The entire proceedings were a revelation to all of the Inquisitor's party, and more especially to Kirk's followers, who had been brought up with the idea that all wearers of the purple were their implacable hereditary enemies.

* * * * *

WHEN the Secret Service squad left the Inquisitor to explore the island, some of them walked arm and arm with members of Barton's party, and it was not long before extremely friendly relations were established. Philip called Haines aside and asked him to return to the laboratory and there discuss with Kirk and himself further action to be taken with regard to the elimination of the dictatorship. Haines agreed enthusiastically and followed Philip to the laboratory where the three made themselves comfortable, while Philip expanded on his immediate plans.

"Haines," said Philip, "it has given me more pleasure than I have known for many a year, to find you so completely in sympathy with our ideas for the alleviation of the conditions in the lower levels of the great cities of United North America. And, if you will align yourself with us, it will be of great advantage to the cause."

"I most assuredly will, Philip," said Randall Haines sincerely. "I don't know what it is, but there was something about that hypnotic stunt of yours that has altered my outlook on life entirely. I feel like a new man and more at peace with my conscience than at any time since I was a boy. What are your plans?"

"They are really quite simple, Randall," said Philip. "The eleven men who are still in the hypnotic state back in our country must, of course, be returned to consciousness. My one unalterable decision in this

entire matter was that no bloodshed would be countenanced. This is a revolution, but there are to be no fatalities. Now I'll just ask you one question: What is your idea of the outcome of the thing if, by some miracle, Jerome Carter should experience a change of heart such as the one you have just gone through?"

"If he did not lose his forceful personality and tremendous will," replied Randall Haines, "I am confident that the entire course of events would be altered. I believe he would bend every effort toward the undoing of all harm that has been accomplished by his actions in the past, and that he would restore the people to their rightful heritage of true liberty and freedom and support the government in all things, to the end of benefiting all in the country and favoring none. It would be a marvelous change, but it is inconceivable."

"Not impossible, Randall," stated Philip. "You have heard of, perhaps you have even witnessed, operations on the brains of criminals which have removed from them forever the criminal tendencies and restored to them normal, well-balanced organs, thus transforming these criminals into useful citizens. I have recently perfected a means of performing such operations by the use of high-frequency vibrations that act on the proper brain centers and completely alter the functioning of the particular portions affected. These vibrations can be employed for all brain operations and do not necessitate cutting into the cranial cavity. I propose to return to New York and to use my apparatus on Carter."

Haines opened his eyes wide. "Is there no danger to the patient in such a procedure?"

"None whatever," Philip replied. "In fact, the health of the patient should be improved. And it is my own thought that if Carter is transformed into a straight-thinking individual, it will be unnecessary to experiment with his associates. What do you think?"

"I think you are absolutely right, Philip. He can keep them all in line without the slightest trouble. As a matter of fact, I feel sure that several members of the council will welcome the change."

"That is my idea also," said Philip, "and I am anxious to return immediately and go ahead with the plans."

"Can it not be done from here by means of the searching and penetrating rays of the detectoscope?" asked Kirk.

"It probably could," said Philip, "but I am afraid to chance it in so important a case. We will experiment later along those lines, but not on human beings until there is absolute certainty of success. The human brain is an exceedingly delicate organ, you know."

"It beats me, Philip," interjected Haines admiringly, "how you are able to accomplish such unheard-of things one after another in quick succession. And now that I am in your laboratory, I am very curious. For one thing, I should like to know how on earth you have been able to converse with your friends and relatives at home and how you put Carter and his gang to sleep from this far-off point."

PHILIP laughed and consulted his watch. "I'll tell you what we'll do, Randall," he said. "It's quite early in the day here, but it is mid-afternoon now in New York. We'll start for home at once, so as to arrive there in the early evening. You remain on board the Inquisitor and allow the pilot to return the patrol vessel to its own berth. On the journey I'll demonstrate my latest inventions; those that have permitted us to accomplish the things you have mentioned. What do you say?"

"Nothing would please me more," said Haines, his eyes shining in anticipation. "The sooner the better."

"It's a go," said Philip, starting at once for the outdoors, where he set up a call for all members of the party to return to the vessel.

They hurried in from all directions and, with the help of Randall Haines and his squad, it was a short job to dismantle the projectoscope tower and stow its sections away in the compartments of the Inquisitor. Haines gave his men their orders and they returned to the patrol ship, which was soon ready for the return trip.

Philip checked up on his own party and found that all were present with the exception of Kirk and Aline. "Kirk, Kirk!" he called.

"Coming!" came an answering voice from the rim of the crater, and the sheepishly smiling face of the tall young man in gray came into view as he tugged at Aline's hand and assisted her to the level surface of the plateau.

"I went to find Aline," he explained as they approached the grinning group at the entrance of the Inquisitor.

"So I see," laughed Philip.

Aline spoke up brightly and unabashed. "Kirk and I have just become engaged," she announced.

"Great stuff, Aline," said Philip, grasping her hand and turning to the embarrassed Kirk. "Congratulations, old man," he continued, transferring his hand-clasp to his friend of the past several years. "Neither of you could have done better."

Mona had the little girl in gray clasped in a close embrace, and she whispered words of happiness to her.

There was a shout from the patrol vessel, and, with a swish and the waving of many hands from its windows, it rose vertically and was soon lost to the sight of the watchers, who waved their farewells gaily.

There was no further delay and it was not long before the Inquisitor had taken to the air and was on its way to far-off New York.

In the navigating cabin where Philip had just relinquished the controls to Jack Sterns, little Aline Sarov, her hand in Kirk's spoke sadly as they watched the outlines of the island fade from view far beneath them.

"Kirk," she said, "I'd like to come back."

"Me too," said Kirk.

"Perhaps you may," said Philip. "I intend to establish a colony here after things are settled back home—perhaps erect a laboratory of my own at the rim of the crater. It is an ideal spot to get away from the rush and bustle of our modern life."

"Yes," agreed Randall Haines, "and it shall be known as Barton's Island. I'll see to that. You know, I staked claim on the island for our government."

Philip grinned, but Mona and Aline applauded enthusiastically.

* * * * *

SEVEN hours later, in the bed chamber of Jerome Carter, the apparatus of Philip's psycho-converter was adjusted in position at the bedside of the sleeping dictator. Gathered in a silent group were Kirk, Randall Haines, President Haven, and three physicians who scowled and hem-hawed over the proceedings.

When the motor-generator commenced its musical hum Randall Haines uttered a startled exclamation. "Why, you old rascal," he said to Philip, "that's what you did to me. Why didn't I realize it before?"

"Sorry?" asked Philip, smiling, as he continued with his adjustments.

"Sorry?" repeated Haines. "I'll never be able to thank you enough. But we'll speak more of that later."

The operation was soon completed. Then, replacing the ray director of the psycho-converter, came the resuscitation tube. All witnesses held their breath as its

sputtering commenced, and Carter's eyelids flickered.

In less than a minute the great man bounded from his bed and stared about him unbelievably. His eyes shone with a new light as they fell on Philip Barton. Then he advanced slowly until he faced the inventor. Hesitatingly he stretched forth his hand and touched Philip's cheek gently.

Then he spoke in a choked voice. "Thank God, you're alive, Philip," he said. "How glad I am."

He grasped both hands of the man he had so recently conspired against and wrung them, as if his soul's salvation depended on the friendship of the inventor.

"Can you forgive me, Philip?" he asked beseechingly. "I have been wrong all these years. But I'll atone, never fear."

"Yes," replied Philip solemnly, "I forgive you, Carter."

Jerome Carter capered like a boy. He shoed the physicians from the room and almost hugged President Haven. When his eyes alighted on the gray-clad figure of Kirk Paulson, he shamefacedly extended his hand.

Kirk grasped it without hesitation and Carter beamed his pleasure. "Thank you, sir," he said. "You give me hope that those of the gray will forgive me also. And they shall never regret it. Things are to be different in our country from this time forth."

President Haven stared in amazement as the transformed Carter turned to him with a sudden remark. "Mr. President," he said, "do you think we could put an act through Congress within the next few days cancelling the debts of the foreign nations?"

"Why—why—I believe so," replied the President in wonder.

"Good," said Carter. "Let's get together on it at once. And I have many other things in mind. Now, please, all of you leave me. I wish to dress."

* * * * *

LATER in the evening, after the members of Carter's council had been restored to consciousness, Philip Barton addressed a huge meeting in the auditorium of the multitude in gray—the New York gathering place. The hall was jammed to the doors, and a full hour was needed to restore order after the thunderous applause was started that greeted the appearance of Philip and Kirk. Hidden by a screen on the platform sat Jerome Carter. At Kirk Paulson's side was the little figure of Aline Sarov. The applause from the central and western meeting places came through the loud speakers with volume equal to that of the local hall, and it required as much effort to silence the distant crowds as it took to quiet those in New York.

"Friends," spoke Philip when quiet was obtained, "I have great news for you. There is now in preparation a bill that will be introduced in Congress within the next few days. This bill will provide for the cancella-

tion of the war debts of the foreign powers, and will thus permit of their rehabilitation. That is but the beginning. We have all hesitated in the past to admit that our great nation has been under the absolute dictatorship of Jerome Carter, though we have known and recognized it for years. And I am here to tell you of the radical change of heart of this great man. He has this night agreed to increase the monthly credit of all workers by twenty-five per cent. This is to take effect at once, and a further increase will follow as quickly as arrangements can be made. All corporation presidents have already agreed and the matter is definitely settled. Further reforms are to follow with all possible speed. The powers of the red police are to be curtailed and their numbers reduced by seventy per cent. Only those needed for traffic regulation and the like are to remain.

"Housing conditions will be investigated immediately and all of you will benefit greatly by improvements that are to be made in this respect. Educational institutions are to be opened to wearers of the gray, and new ones will be provided as rapidly as Mr. Carter and his associates can obtain material and recruit labor. All class legislation is to be repealed. The President has agreed to use his influence in conjunction with Carter's. A special election will be held as quickly as the machinery can be set in motion, and the votes of all may be cast without fear of retaliatory action by those of the purple or the red police. You may replace any government official you desire and may elect to office whomever you wish from this time henceforth. And now I have a final surprise for you."

A deathly stillness fell over the hall and the two distant meeting places as Philip advanced to the screen. And when he led forth the purple-clad figure of Jerome Carter, the resulting din eclipsed that which had greeted him and Kirk Paulson.

Philip seated himself beside Kirk and Aline as Carter advanced to the center of the platform and waited smilingly for the quiet that would permit him to speak.

"Wonderful, isn't it?" asked Philip.

"Marvelous," agreed Aline, without relinquishing her hold on the strong hand of Kirk. "But when do we leave again for Barton's Island?"

Philip laughed heartily at her remark as he watched Jerome Carter vainly striving to make his voice heard above the clamor of the emancipated workers.

And on the streets and through all public and private newsmongers there spread the astounding news. There would be very little sleep that night in all North America, for already celebration was in progress, the like of which had never before swept the country.

In the executive mansion President and Mrs. Haven were happier than they had been in seven long years. Mona thrilled with love and pride at thought of the great accomplishment of her husband.

THE END

The Sunken World

By Stanton A. Coblentz

THE world of literature has several Atlantis stories to its credit, but we are certain that our readers will enjoy an Atlantis story by this modern author, much of whose work has appeared in AMAZING STORIES.

Science is not unconvinced to-day that there was an Atlantis many thousands of years ago. Just exactly what became of it no one knows. The author, in this story, which no doubt will become a classic some day, has approached the subject at a totally different angle than has ever been attempted before; and let no one think that the idea and daring, impossible as it would seem at first, is incredible. Nor is it at all impossible that progress and science goes and comes in waves. It may be believed that millions of years ago the world had reached a much higher culture than we have to-day. Electricity and radio, and all that goes with it, may have been well known eons ago, only to be swept away and rediscovered. It seems there is nothing new under the sun.

But the big idea behind the author's theme is the holding of present-day science and progress up to a certain amount of ridicule, and showing up our civilization in a sometimes grotesque mirror, which may not be always pleasing to our vanity and to our appraisal of our so-called present-day achievements.

The point the author brings out is that it is one thing to have power in science and inventions, but that it is another thing to use that power correctly. He shows dramatically and vividly how it can be used and how it should be used.

IT WAS in the spring of 1918 that the United States submarine X-111 was launched upon its adventurous career. The German commerce raiders had now reached the height of their effectiveness; almost daily they were taking their toll of luckless seamen and provision-laden steamers; and the United States government, in alarm that was never officially admitted, had resolved upon desperate measures. The result was the X-111. The first of a fleet of undersea craft, this vessel was constructed upon lines never before attempted. Not only was it exceedingly long (being about two hundred feet from stem to stern), but it was excessively narrow, and a man had to be short indeed to stand upright on its single deck without coming into contact with the arching ceiling. The ship, in fact, was nothing more nor less than a long pipe-like tube of reinforced steel, able to cleave the water at tremendous speed and ram and destroy any enemy with its beak-like prow.

But this was only its slightest point of novelty. At both ends and at several points along the sides it was equipped with water-piercing searchlights of a power never before known (the creation of Walter Tamrock, the Kansas inventor who lost his life in the war); and it was provided with a series of air-tight and water-proof compartments, any one of which might be pierced without seriously injuring the vessel as a whole. Hence the X-111 was generally known as unsinkable, and upon it the American officials fastened their hopes of abating the nuisance of the enemy "U-boat."

The sinking of this "unsinkable" vessel is now of

course a matter of history. Close observers of naval events will recall how, in May, 1918, the newspapers reported the disappearance of another United States submarine. All that was known with certainty was, that the ship had been commissioned to the danger zone; that it had failed to return to its base at the expected time, and that the passing days brought no news of it; that wireless messages and searching expeditions alike proved unavailing, and that it was two months before the only clue as to its fate was found. Then it was that a British destroyer, on scout duty in the North Sea, picked up a drifting life preserver bearing the imprint "X-111." For strategic reasons, this fact was not divulged until much later, and for strategic reasons it was not made known that the missing submarine was of a new and previously untried type; but the mystery of the X-111's disappearance weighed heavily upon the minds of naval officials, and secretly they resolved upon immediate and exhaustive investigation. All in vain. Not a trace of the lost ship or of the thirty-nine members of its crew could be found; not a scrap of the usual drifting flotsam or wreckage could be picked up anywhere on the sea; and at last it was admitted in despair that the waters would perhaps guard their secret forever.

Seven years went by. Peace had long since returned, and the X-111 and its tragedy had been forgotten except by a few relatives of the unfortunate thirty-nine. Then suddenly the mystery was fanned into vivid life again. A bearded man, with a strange greenish complexion and eyes that blinked oddly beneath wide, colored glasses, appeared at the offices of

the Navy department at Washington and claimed to be one of the company of the X-111. At first, of course, he was merely laughed at as a madman, and could induce no one to listen to him seriously; but he was so persistent in his pleas, and so anxious to give proof of his identity, that a few began to suspect that there might be some shadow of truth to his claims after all. Half-heartedly, an investigation was undertaken—and with results that left the world gaping in amazement! The testimony of a dozen witnesses, as well as the unmistakable evidence of finger-prints and handwriting, proved that the wild-looking stranger was none other than Anson Harkness, Ensign on the ill-starred X-111, long mourned as dead. Now, for the first time, the truth about the disappearance of that remarkable vessel was to be made known; and the eager public was treated to a story so extraordinary that only irrefutable evidence could make it seem credible. It is safe to say that never, since Columbus returned to Spain with the news of his discoveries in seeking a western route to the far East, had any mariner delivered to his people a revelation so unexampled and marvelous.

But while numerous accounts of the great discovery are extant, and while the furor of discussion over the newspaper articles and interviews shows no sign of waning, the public has yet to read the tale in the words of Harkness himself. And it is for this reason that the accompanying history, to which Harkness has devoted himself ever since his return from exile, possesses a peculiar and timely interest. Harkness has described, unaffectedly and sincerely, the most perilous exploits which any man has ever survived. Hence the following pages should prove entertaining not only to the student of world events, but to that larger public which finds value in a rare and stirring bit of autobiography.

STANTON A. CORLENTZ,
(New York, 1928.)

CHAPTER I

Harkness Explains His Disappearance

THE maiden voyage of the X-111 was ill-fated from the first. Perhaps the new inventions had not yet been perfected, or perhaps, in the haste of wartime, adequate tests had not been made; at any rate, the vessel developed mechanical troubles after her first half day at sea. To begin with, the rudder and steering apparatus proved unmanageable; then, after hours spent in making repairs, the engines showed a tendency to balk under the tremendous speed we were ordered to maintain; and finally, when we had about solved the engine problem, we had the misfortune to collide with a half-submerged derelict, while running on the surface, and one of our water-tight compartments sprang a leak.

Immediately following the accident, we had risen to the surface, for the break was about on a level with our waterline, and the compartment could not be completely flooded so long as we did not submerge. Yet Captain Gavison warned us not to waste a moment, and the men worked with desperate speed to repair the damage, for we knew that we were in the zone of the German U-boat, and that any delay might prove perilous, if not fatal. Unfortunately, the sea was unusually calm and the day was blue and clear, so that even our low-lying hulk could be sighted many miles across the waters.

I do not know precisely at what position we were then stationed, except that it was somewhere in the

Eastern Atlantic, and at a point where, according to the warnings of our Secret Service, a concentration of German submarines was to be expected. At any other time we would have welcomed the opportunity to come to grips with the foe; but now, in our disabled condition, we kept a lookout with grave misgivings, and silently prayed that the damage might be repaired before the enemy slunk into view. Yet it was slow work to man the pumps and at the same time to weld a strip of metal across the jagged gap in our side; and hours passed while we stood there working thigh-deep in water, our heads bent low, for there was but two or three feet of breathing space beneath the curved iron ceiling. Suppressed growls and curses came from our lips each time a sudden surge of the waters interfered with the welding. Meanwhile all was in confusion; the men working with the feverish inefficiency of terror, scarcely heeding the orders of the officers; the chief contents of the compartment floating about almost unnoted. I distinctly remember that several articles, including a life preserver which one of the recruits had unfastened in his fright, were washed overboard.

Still, we did make some progress, and after four or five hours, and just as the blood-red sun was sinking low in the west, we found our task nearing completion. A few more minutes, and the welding would be accomplished; a few more minutes, and darkness would be upon us, leaving us free from fear of attack for the next eight or ten hours.

It was just when we felt safest that the real danger presented itself. A swift trail of white shot across the waters far to westward, and, advancing at full speed, vanished in a long, frothy furrow just in our wake. "A German U-boat! A U-boat two points off the port bow!" frantically cried the watch; and we scrambled from the flooded compartment as the Captain gave the order "Submerge!" Now we heard the rapid churning of our engines as we went plunging into the blackness beneath the sea; now we made ready to launch a torpedo of our own as our periscope showed us the disappearing tip of an enemy submarine; now we were hurled into an exciting chase as our prodigiously powerful searchlights illumined whole leagues of the water, even revealing the dark, cigar-shaped hulk of the foe. Had we not been impeded by the dead weight of a compartment full of water, we would unquestionably have overtaken the enemy, rammed it and ended its career; even as it was, we seemed to be gaining upon it, and we had hopes of shooting up unseen and bullet-like from the dark, and with tremendous impact smiting it in two. Not even the unexpected appearance of a second submarine altered our plans. Handicapped as we were, we would show our superiority to both the enemy craft!

But it was at this point that mechanical troubles again betrayed us. Overworked by our excessive burst of speed, our engines (which were of the super-electric type recently invented by Cogswell) gave signs of slowing up and stopping; and so dangerously overheated were they, that our Captain had to halt our vessel abruptly, almost within striking distance of the foe. Our position now was precarious, for at any moment the German searchlights might spy us out, and a few undersea bombs might send us to the bottom.

As our own equipment had purposely been made as light as possible, we were provided with no explosive shells other than torpedoes; hence we were compelled to rise to the surface in order to attack. This, we realized, was a hazardous expedient, since both the

enemy vessels were already in a position to answer our bombardment, volley for volley. But trusting to the gathering darkness and to our aggressive tactics to win us the advantage, we unhesitatingly rose to the level, and, with as little delay as possible, discharged a torpedo toward the dim low-lying form of the foe.

Whether that projectile reached its goal, none of us will ever be able to say. From the sudden, furious eruption of spray in the direction of the enemy craft, I am inclined to believe that this was among the U-boats later reported missing; yet, the torpedo may merely have struck some floating object and so have lost its prey. Whatever the results, we were unable to observe with certainty, for at the same moment a gleaming streak shot toward us across the dark waters, and the next instant we went sprawling about the deck as a dull thudding crash came to our ears and the vessel shook and wavered as though in an earthquake's grip. Half dazed from the shock, we gathered ourselves together and rose uncertainly to our feet, staring at one another in dull consternation. And at the same moment one of the seamen burst wildly into the cabin, despair and terror in his maddened eyes. "The central compartment!" he cried. "The central compartment! It's flooded, all flooded!" And as if in proof of his words, we felt ourselves sinking, sinking slowly, though we had not been ordered to submerge; and the darkness of the twilight skies quickly gave way to the darkness beneath the ocean.

IT was some minutes before we quite realized what was happening. Accustomed as we were to under-sea traveling, we did not at first understand that this was an adventure quite out of the ordinary. Even when the waters had lost their first pale translucency and had become utterly black and opaque, we did not realize our terrible predicament. Only after our vessel began listing violently, and we felt the deck sloping at an angle of forty-five degrees, did we recognize the full horror of our position. Although we could see not one inch beyond the thick glass portholes, I had an indefinable sense that we were sinking, sinking down, down, down through vague and unknown abysses; and the stark and helpless terror on the assembled faces gave proof that the others shared my feelings. Not a word did we utter. Indeed, speaking would not have been easy, for a low, continuous roaring was in our ears, a hoarse, muffled roaring reminding me of the murmuring in a sea-shell. At the same time, a strange depression overwhelmed my senses; it seemed as though the atmosphere had suddenly become thick and heavy, too heavy for breathing; it seemed as though an unnatural weight had been piled upon me, threatening to crush and stifle me. Yet I did notice that the vessel quivered and lunged upward every few seconds, in a furious effort to right itself and rise to the surface. I did fancy that I heard the buzzing of the engines at times, an intermittent buzzing that was most disquieting; and I found myself, like the others, hanging to the brass railings to steady myself when the ship heaved and shuddered, or to keep my footing when we slanted downward.

Perhaps five minutes had passed when the door leading forward was thrust open, and Captain Gavison climbed precariously into the room. All eyes were bent upon him in silent inquiry; but his grim, stoically firm countenance was far from reassuring. It was apparent that he had something to say, and that he did not care to say it; and several anxious moments elapsed while he stood glowering upon us, evidently undecided whether to give his message words.

Yet even at this crisis he could not forget discipline. His first words brought us no information, and his first action was to station us about the room in orderly fashion, assigning each to some specific duty.

"I will not keep the facts from you," he declared, with slow, deliberate accentuation, when finally we were all in position. "Three of our compartments are flooded. The other compartments seem to be holding out as yet, but the great mass of water in our hold is bearing us rapidly downward, and the engines seem unable to neutralize the effect. At the last reading, we were nine hundred and twenty-seven feet below sea level."

"Great God! What are we to do about it?" I gasped, in biting terror.

"Suggestions are in order," stated the Captain, laconically.

But no suggestion was forthcoming.

"Of course, we are in no immediate danger . . ." he resumed. But he might have spared his words. Most of us had had sufficient experience of undersea travel to know that the danger was real enough. Barring the remote contingency that the engines would be brought back into efficient working order, there were only two possibilities. On the one hand, we might reach the bottom of the sea, and, stranded there, would perish of starvation or slow suffocation. Or, in the second place, we might continue drifting downward until the tremendous pressure of the water, proving too strong even for the stout steel envelope of our vessel, would bend and crush it like an egg-shell.

Although we could no longer guide our course, our gigantic searchlights were at once brought into play, piercing the water with brilliant yellow streamers. Yet they might have been searchlights in a tomb, for they showed us nothing except the minute wavy dark shapes that occasionally drifted in and out of our line of vision. There was something ghastly, I thought, about that light, that intense unearthly sallow light, which glided slowly in long curves and spirals about the thick enveloping darkness. And the very penetrating power of the rays served only to accentuate the horror. For the illumination ended in nothingness; nothingness seemed to stretch above us, beneath us, and to all sides of us; we were enfolded in it as in a black mantle; it seemed to be stretching out long arms to fetter us, to gather us up, to strangle us slyly.

SLOWLY, with agonizing slowness, the moments crept by; slowly we continued sinking, down, down, down, ever down and down, with movements gradual and constantly diminishing, yet never ceasing. Never before in history, we told ourselves, had living men been plunged so far beneath the ocean. Our instruments recorded first twelve hundred feet, then fourteen, then sixteen, then eighteen hundred feet below sea level!

And as we sank downward, we became aware that we were not the only living creatures in these depths. Our searchlights made us the center of attraction for myriads of scaly things; whole schools and squadrons of fishes were gathering moth-like in the vivid illumination thrown out by our vessel. Some were long, snake-like, with thin heads set with rows of spike-like teeth, and tiny eyes that gleamed evilly in the uncanny light; some were lithe sea dragons, with wolfish mouths and sabre-like bony appendages projecting from low foreheads; some were many-colored, rainbow-hued or streaked with black and golden, or red and azure, or yellow and white; some had chameleon eyes that flashed first green and then blue, according to the play of the light about them; many were flitting to and fro, circling and spiralling and

doubling back and forth at incredible speed; and not a few, unacquainted with the ways of submarines, collided full-tilt with the thick glass of our portholes.

But as our depth gradually increased, our finny visitors began to give way to others stranger still. When we were twenty-two hundred feet below the surface, the searchlights were no longer necessary to reveal the denizens of the deep, for the inhabitants of those unthinkable regions carried their own lamps! And how they amazed us and startled us!—how, in our shuddering nerve-racking terror, they appeared to us as ghosts or avenging fiends, or struck our overworked imaginations as approaching foes or rescuers! Suddenly, out of the deathly blackness, a spurt of green light would appear, swiftly widening until it seemed an unearthly searchlight—and, from a narrow focus of flame, two huge burning green eyes would shoot forth, darting cold malice at us through the glass port, until the yellow electric light would seem tinged with an emerald reflection. Or else a tiny flattened disk, softly phosphorescent throughout and marked on one surface by two bright beady eyes, would come floating in our direction like a pale apparition; or, again, a long dark rod, brilliantly white like a living flashlight, would dart curving and gleaming toward us out of the remote gloomy depths. But more terrifying than any of these were the nameless monsters with invisible bodies and lidless, fiery yellow eyes of the size of baseballs,—eyes that stared in at us, and stared and stared, as though all the concentrated horror of the universe were glaring upon us, seeking to ferret us out and mark us for its victims.

And still we were sinking, unceasingly sinking, till the last faint hope had died in the heart of the most sanguine, and in despair and with half-mumbled phrases we admitted that there could be no rescue for us. When we were twenty-five hundred feet below the surface, the fury of expectation had given place to a blank and settled despondency; when the distance was twenty-eight hundred feet, each was striving in his own way to prepare himself for the fate which all felt, to be but a question of hours. In our panic-stricken horror, we had all long ago forgotten the positions assigned us by the Captain; and the Captain himself did not appear to notice where we were. Young Rawson, the newest of the recruits, had gone down on his knees, and with tears in his eyes was murmuring half audible prayers; Matthew Stangale, one of the oldest and most hardened of the seamen, was pacing restlessly back and forth, back and forth, in the narrow compartment, clenching his fists furiously and muttering to himself; Daniel Howlett, veteran of many campaigns, contented himself with a suppressed growling and profanity, and his curses were echoed by his companions; Frank Ripley, a college gridiron hero, enlisted for the war, buried himself in a corner of the room, his face covered by his hands, the very picture of dejection, though every once in a while, wistfully and half-furtively, he would let his gaze travel to a little photograph he guarded close to his bosom. And as for Captain Gavison, on whom we had fastened our last fading hope of escape—he merely stood near the porthole with hands clenched behind his back and thin lips tightly compressed, peering out into the black waters as though he read there some secret hidden from the obtuse gaze of his followers.

WE were below the three thousand foot level when fresh cause for anxiety appeared. "The holy saints have mercy on us!" suddenly exclaimed James Stranahan, one of the common seamen, as he crossed himself piously. And pointing in awe-stricken amaze-

ment through one of the glass spy-holes which led from the deck down through the bottom of the ship, he called attention to a dim shimmering luminescence far below. Excitedly we crowded about him, almost tumbling over one another in our eagerness and terror, but for a moment we could see nothing. Then, slowly, as we stood straining our eyes to fathom the blackness, we became aware of a vague, filmy, wide-spread sheet of light twinkling faintly beneath us, remote as the stars of an invented Milky Way.

A sheet of light beneath us, at the bottom of the sea! In incredulous astonishment, we turned to one another, scarcely able to believe our senses, our horror written plainly in our gaping eyes! And in silence, and with fear-blanching faces, half of the company made the sign of the cross.

"Sure it's a ghost, a deep-sea ghost!" ventured the superstitious Stranahan.

"It's where the sea serpents have their home!" put in Stangale, with an abortive attempt to be jocular. "There's ten million of them down there, with devil's eyes of fire!"

"Maybe it's the Evil One himself!" suggested Stranahan, not content with a single guess. "What if it's the very throne-room of Hell, and them are the flames of Old Nick!"

These words did not seem to reassure the rest of the crew. Several were trembling visibly, and several continued to cross themselves in silence.

Meanwhile the Captain had ordered the searchlights turned downward, and in long loops and curves the cutting light swept the darkness beneath. But not a thing was visible, except for a few flapping fishy forms; and our lanterns served only to conceal the mysterious luminescence.

Yet, when the searchlights were again directed upward, that luminescence became more distinct and seemed to stretch to infinite distances on all sides. But it was still incalculably remote, and still filled us with alarm and foreboding. Whatever it was (and we could not help feeling that it was evil), we knew that it was a thing beyond the reach of all human experience; whatever it was, it was a monstrous thing, possibly malevolent and terrible, and not inconceivably ghostly and supernatural.

But as we continued to sink, I began to doubt whether any of us should live to solve the mystery. The air in our overcrowded compartments was becoming oppressively heavy and vitiated; we were like men locked in sealed vaults, and there was no possibility of renewing our exhausted oxygen supply. Already I was beginning to feel drowsy from the lack of air; my head was aching dully and I had almost ceased to care where we went or what befell us. To-day, when I look back upon the racking events of those terrible hours, I feel sure that I was not far from delirium; and when I recall how some of my comrades reclined drunkenly on the floor, with half-hysterical mumblings and wailings, I am certain that there were but few of us, who retained our right senses.

There is, indeed, a blank space in my memory concerning what occurred at about this time; I may have fallen off into a doze or sodden slumber lasting for minutes or even for hours. I can only say that I have a recollection of coming abruptly to myself, as from a state of coma; with a sudden jolt of understanding, I realized where I was, and observed with a shock that half a dozen of my comrades were gathered together in a little group, pointing downward with excited exclamations.

Staggering to my feet, I joined them, and in a mo-

ment shared in their agitation. The lights beneath us were now far brighter—they no longer formed a vague shimmering sheen but were concentrated brilliantly in a score of golden globes of the apparent size of the sun. "Could it be that the ocean too has its suns?" I asked myself, as when one asks dazed questions in a dream. And looking at those spectral lights that wavered and gleamed through the pale translucent waters, I felt that this was surely but a nightmare from which I should soon awaken. Fantastic fish, with triangular glowing red heads and searchlight eyes projected on slender tubes, darted before our windows in innumerable schools; but these seemed almost familiar now by comparison with those eerie golden lights below; and it was upon the golden illumination that my gaze was riveted as we settled slowly down and down. Soon it became apparent that the great central globes were not the only source of the radiance, for smaller points of light gradually became visible, some of them moving, actually moving as though borne by living hands!—and even the spaces between the lights seemed to wear an increasing golden luster! Yet with the golden was mingled a singular tinge of green, a green that seemed scarcely of the waters; and the mysterious depths were no longer black, but olive-hued, as though the light came filtering to us through some solid dark-green medium.

But a more imminent peril was to distract our attention from the weird lights. For some minutes I had been vaguely aware of something peculiar in the aspect of our compartment; yet, in my stupefied condition, I had not been able to determine just what was wrong. But full realization came to me when Stranahan, pointing upward, wide-eyed with horror, suddenly exclaimed, "Heaven preserve us, look at the ceiling!"

We all looked. The ceiling was bulging inches downward, as though the terrific pressure of the waters were already bursting the tough steel envelope of the X-111. And at the same time we observed that the deck we stood on, was bulging upward, and that the bulkheads were being twisted and distorted like iron rails warped by an earthquake.

BUT now came the greatest surprise of all. "By all the saints and little devils!" burst forth the irrepressible Stranahan, pointing downward and forgetting the aspect of the bulkheads and deck. "There's a city under the sea!"

"A city under the sea!" we echoed, in stupefied amazement. And from one corner of the room came a burst of hysterical laughter, which wavered and broke and then died out, sounding uncannily like a fiend's derision.

"But I tell you, there is a city under the sea!" insisted Stranahan, noting the incredulous stares with which we regarded him. "The Lord strike me dead if I didn't see its streets and houses!"

Though none of us doubted that the Lord would indeed do as Stranahan suggested, we interpreted his remarks as mere delirious ravings, and continued to stare at him in petrified silence.

"You see, there she is!" persisted the seaman, still pointing downward regardless of our disbelief. And, crossing himself piously, he continued, in awed tones, "May the Virgin have pity on us, if that don't look like a church!"

Stranahan's last words had such a tone of conviction that, though our doubts were still strong, we could not forbear to look. And, after a single glance, our scepticism gave place to dumbfounded amazement. For was this not a city staring up at us from the

green-golden depths? Or at least the ruins of what had been a city? In outlines wavy because of the dense, shifting waters, and yet as definite of form as reflections in a still pool, half a dozen great yellow-white temples seemed to glimmer beneath the brilliant lights, with massive columns, wide-reaching porticoes and colonades, and gracefully curving arches and domes.

Was this but a mirage? We asked ourselves. Or were these the remains of some submerged, ancient town? Never had we heard of mirages beneath the sea—but if this were a dead city, then why these vivid lights? And, certainly, no living city could be imagined in these profound watery abysses.

Even as we wondered, we seemed to note a gradual change in our movement. We were no longer sinking; we were drifting with slow motion, almost horizontally; and just beneath us appeared to be an impenetrable but transparent, dense, greenish wall, a wall that—had the idea not been too preposterous—we might almost have imagined to be of glass. Beneath this wall gleamed no lantern-bearing, fishy eyes, but the dazzling golden orbs and the smaller scattered lights shone steadily with piercing radiance; and beneath us, at a distance that may have been five hundred feet and may have been a thousand, the vaults and domes and columns of innumerable stone edifices shone palely and with sallow luster. Surely, we thought, this was some unheard-of Athens, doomed long ago by tidal wave or volcano.

Gradually, for some reason that we could not quite explain, our horizontal motion seemed to be increasing; and, caught apparently by some rapid deep-sea current, we drifted with appreciable velocity above those dim realms of green and golden. Palace after magnificent palace, many seemingly modelled by architects of old Greece, went gliding by beneath us; countless statues, tall as the buildings, pointed up at us with hands that were uncannily life-like; wide avenue after wide avenue flashed by; and one or two colossal theatres of old Grecian design; but no living thing was to be seen, or, at least, so it seemed, for though we strained our eyes, we could discern only shadows moving in those uncertain depths, only shadows and an occasional firefly light which zigzagged fitfully among the buildings and which we took to be some strange illuminated finny thing.

Then suddenly, for no apparent reason, fresh terror seized us. Perhaps it was because we realized abruptly the full eerie horror of floating thus above a city of the dead; perhaps it was that the whole unspeakable ghastliness of the adventure had again flashed upon us. Be that as it may, we began to shake and shiver once more as though in the grip of a mastering emotion, or as though obsessed by forethought of approaching disaster; and muttered prayers again were heard, and more than one silent tear was shed.

But the time for tears and prayers was over. Our motion, gradually increasing for some minutes, was suddenly accelerated as if by some gigantic prod; we seemed caught in some mighty movement of the waters, some maelstrom that whirled us about and buffeted us like a feather; a hoarse, continuous thunder dinned in our ears, and we went shooting forward with prodigious speed. Then came a violent jerk, and we found ourselves tossed pellmell to all corners of the room; then another jerk, and we were flung back again like dice shaken in a box; then still another jerk, more vehement than the others, and our terrorized minds lost track of events as our vessel lunged and heaved, then veered and stood almost on end, they began to spin round and round, like a swiftly

gyrating top . . . And in that whirling confusion our senses reeled and grew blurred, and darkness came clouding back, darkness and sleep and nothingness . . .

CHAPTER II

Untraveled Depths

HOW any of us chanced to survive is more than I can say. In the turbulence and vertigo of that last blind, roaring moment, I had vaguely felt that we had reached the end of all things; hence it was almost with surprise that I found myself hazily regaining consciousness, and discovered that I could still move my limbs and open my eyes. At first, indeed, I had the dim sense that I was dead and embarking upon the Afterlife; and it was only the definite sensation of pain in my bruised arms and legs, and the definite sight of my comrades tumbled about in ungainly attitudes, which convinced me that I was still on the better known side of the grave.

"Sure, and I thought we went through the very gates of Hell!" came a familiar voice; and Stranahan rose unsteadily to his feet, lugubriously nursing a sprained wrist. "By all the saints in heaven, we must be a devilish lot! The devil himself didn't seem able to get us!"

Cheered by the sound of a human voice, I followed Stranahan's example, and slowly and painfully arose. I was thankful to learn that, although badly battered, I had suffered no broken bones; and as my comrades one by one staggered up from the deck, I was glad to observe that none were gravely injured.

Our vessel had assumed a horizontal position again, but I felt that our surroundings were strangely altered. While a pale luminescence seemed to transfigure the waters on both sides and above us, yet below us the golden lights were no longer visible, and everything seemed impenetrably black.

Of course, the Captain again ordered the searchlights turned on—and this time with extraordinary results. Just beneath us, actually in contact with the bottom of the X-111, a flat, sandy reach of ground was visible—certainly, the bottom of the sea! But this fact was the least remarkable of all. On both sides of us, at distances possibly of two hundred yards, a high and geometrically regular embankment shot up precipitously, ending in a yellow illuminated patch of water whose nature we could scarcely surmise. The one thing apparent was that we were in a submarine channel, a sort of river bed in the bottom of the sea. This fact was made evident by a current which sent us skimming along the soft sands although our engines had long since ceased to supply us with power.

"I can't understand it!" sighed Captain Gavison, shaking his head dolefully. "I can't understand it at all! For twenty-five years I've studied the ocean currents, but I've never heard of anything like this!"

Just at this point our searchlights showed us a long, lithe dark form gliding rapidly by through the waters perhaps fifty feet above. It was as large as the largest known shark, but was shaped like no fish I had ever seen, tapering to a slender, canoe-like point at both ends; and, as it passed, the water seemed to foam and bubble strangely in its wake.

"Perdition take me, if it ain't a sea dragon!" ventured Stranahan, who had to have his say.

"Stranahan, be silent!" snapped the Captain, in high irritation. "You're always saying the wrong thing at the wrong time!"

"Yes, sir," admitted Stranahan, meekly, a grave expression in his pale blue eyes.

"If you want to make yourself useful, Stranahan," continued the Captain severely, although with less asperity than before, "go forward, and find out how far we are beneath sea level."

"Aye, aye, sir," agreed Stranahan, remembering to salute.

"How far below were we at the last reading, sir?" I inquired of the Captain, after Stranahan had vanished through the small compartment door.

"Thirty-seven hundred feet," returned the officer, abruptly. "But we've sunk considerably since then."

It was at this juncture that Stranahan reappeared in the doorway, a stare of blank, incredulous astonishment on his lean, hardened face.

"Well?" the Captain demanded. "How far below are we now?"

Stranahan mopped his brow as if to wipe off an invisible perspiration. But he answered not a word.

"Stranahan," growled the exasperated officer, somewhat after the manner of a schoolma'am to an unruly pupil, "do you hear me? I'm asking to know how far below we are now?"

"Well, sir," drawled Stranahan, saluting mechanically, "wouldn't I be telling you if I knew? But, saints in heaven, sir, that machine must be bewitched! Else I'm seeing things!"

"Didn't you notice the reading?" bawled the Captain.

"Yes, sir," Stranahan replied, humbly. "That's what the trouble is, sir."

"Then how far below are we?"

Stranahan hesitated as though he would rather not speak. "Forty-four feet," he muttered, at length.

A murmur of suppressed excitement passed from end to end of the room. "Forty-four feet!" yelled the Captain. "You mean forty-four hundred!"

"No, sir," maintained Stranahan, quietly. "I mean forty-four."

THE Captain's anger became uncontrollable. "Stranahan, you must take me for a fool!" he shouted. "This is not the moment for practical jokes! At any other time I'd have you thrown in the brig!"

"But, sir—" Stranahan started to protest.

"That's enough!" roared the officer, fairly shaking with fury. And, turning to one of the younger men, he commanded, "Ripley, see how far below water level we are!"

"Aye, aye, sir," assented Ripley, and left the room.

A moment later he returned with a sheepish grin on his face.

"Well, how far below are we?" demanded the Captain.

But Ripley, like Stranahan, seemed reluctant to speak. He coughed, gasped, stammered out an unintelligible syllable or two, cleared his throat, stood gaping at us stupidly while we looked on expectantly, and finally blurted out, "Forty—forty-three feet, sir!"

"Forty-three feet!" bellowed the Captain. "Has the whole crew gone crazy?"

And, without further ado, Gavison himself went lunging toward the door, and disappeared in the forward compartment.

It was several minutes before he returned. But when he rejoined us, his face wore a look of undisguised amazement. Furtively and almost shamefacedly he peered at us, like one who fancies he is losing his wits.

"Well, sir, how far below are we now?" I questioned.

The Captain cleared his throat, and hesitated perceptibly before replying. "I—I really don't know. I can't understand—I can't understand it at all."

If the instruments aren't out of order, we're exactly forty-two feet below!"

I gasped stupidly; then suggested, "No doubt, sir, the instruments are out of order."

"They are not!" denied the Captain. "I've tested them!"

Again the Captain hesitated briefly; then abruptly he resumed, "Besides, as you know, there are two instruments. They both record forty-two feet. Surely, they can't both be wrong in exactly the same way."

There ensued a moment of silence, during which we stared dully at one another, filled with mute questionings we would not dare to put into words.

"But how do you explain—" I at length broke in.

"I don't explain at all!" interrupted the officer. "We're simply running counter to all natural laws! According to all estimates, we should be nearly a mile deep by now!"

And the Captain stood stroking his chin in grave perplexity. Then turning suddenly to us all, he remarked, "I can't see how it can be boys; but if we're only forty-two feet deep, then maybe the engines will have life enough in them to pull us out. At least, it's a chance worth taking."

Half an hour later, after a few instructions and the assignment of the crew to duty, we had the pleasure of hearing once more the churning and throbbing of the engines. At first it promised to be a barren pleasure indeed, for the abused machinery gasped and sputtered as though determined upon a permanent strike; but finally after many vain efforts, we were greeted by the continuous buzzing of the motors. Then we found ourselves slowly moving, at first scarcely faster than the current, but with gradually increasing velocity; and by degrees we felt the deck taking on an upward slope as the nose of the vessel was pointed toward the surface of the waters. It was not an easy pull, for our three flooded compartments were powerfully inclined to hold us to the bottom; and in the beginning we made very little progress; several times we felt our hull scraping the ocean floor, but eventually, the engines, waxing to their full power, began to cleave the water at gratifying speed, and we found that we were moving definitely though slowly upward.

Of course, hope came to us then in a powerful wave, accompanied by black flashes of despair, for what if impassable thousands of feet of water still rolled above us? Impatiently we fastened our eyes on the pressure gauges, and impatiently watched the registered distance dwindle from forty feet to thirty-five, from thirty-five to thirty, from thirty to twenty-five, and from twenty-five to twenty! And now, in a sudden wild burst of joy, we realized that probably we were saved! A pale but unmistakable radiance was seeping in through the glass ports, a radiance far more distinct and reassuring than the eerie luminescence we had noticed before. Certainly, this was the sunlight—and in a few moments we might bask again in the warmth of day!

And as we rose from twenty feet to fifteen, and from fifteen to ten, our hopes found increasing fuel. The light filtering in through the windows brightened at a rate that was more than heartening—and through the clear waters, even without the aid of the searchlights, we could distinguish a steep embankment, perhaps fifty or a hundred yards away. And just above us, almost within grasping distance, we thought we could notice the line where water met air;

But we had no intimation of the surprise that lay in store for us. To-day, as I look back upon those events with clear perspective, it seems incredible to

me that we could actually have expected to escape at once to the upper world. But hope had doubtless blinded our eyes and suffering blunted our perceptions, so that we could not understand that we were at the beginning, rather than at the end of our adventures.

SUDDENLY, with a furious lunge and an unwonted, violent burst of speed, we found ourselves launched upward toward the wavy, light-shot level that was our goal; and now a blinding brilliance was upon us, and for a moment we had to shade our eyes to shield them from the dazzling change. Then, when by degrees we were able to glance again about us, we found that we were on the surface of the waters, actually on the surface!—but where was this that we had come up? and in what strange and unmapped continent? There was scarcely one of us that could suppress a cry of astonishment—we were afloat, not upon the ocean, as we had expected, but rather on a wide and rapidly flowing river—a river that washed no shores ever described by human tongue! Altogether, it was one of the weirdest and most magnificent lands imaginable; on both sides of the stream spread a flat plain, dotted with great sea shells and greenish boulders, which in their turn were interspersed with a mossy brown vegetation and pale, graceful flowers like waterlilies on solitary stalks. At measured intervals, as far as the eye could reach, were colossal stone columns, enriched with pastel tintings of pink and blue; and these shot upward hundreds of feet as though supporting some titanic dome, ending, unaccountably in a dark, green sky from which glared several sunlike, golden orbs, which suffused the scene in a mellow, unearthly luster that was beautiful, yet terrifying and ghastly.

Rubbing our eyes, like children still not half awake, we gazed at this fantastic, lovely spectacle. Not a word did we speak; we could not have found language to voice our amazement. Only the Captain, out of the whole thirty-nine of us, retained some measure of self-possession; and though, as he afterwards confessed, he was so dazzled that he spoke and acted mechanically, he did retain the presence of mind to order our vessel steered to shore and to be anchored.

It is still a marvel to me that we had the energy to carry out these commands. Somehow, we brought the X-111 to land; and somehow, after several false starts, we managed to moor the ship to a large boulder in a sort of miniature bay.

And then Stranahan proved again that he possessed an original mind. Not only was he the first to force himself out of the opening door of the submarine, but he carried out a large American flag, which he planted in the ground among the brown weeds between the boulders, while with sedate and ceremonious gestures, he proclaimed, "In the name of the United States of America, I take possession of this land!"

But the rest of us gave no heed to his words. We were taking deep, refreshing breaths of the pure, clean air, which came to us almost like a mercy from heaven after the suffocating atmosphere of the submarine. And before we had had half the needed time to revive our starving lungs, an astounding phenomenon, as unexpected as the very discovery of this spectral region, was to drive Stranahan from our thoughts at the same time that it flooded our minds with terror. For the golden lights above suddenly flickered, gave out a fugitive spark or two, and with meteor swiftness, went out. We found ourselves mantled in a starless and impenetrable blackness, more mysterious and dreadful than the loneliest watery abysses from which we had just escaped.

CHAPTER III

On Unknown Shores

NO sooner was the darkness complete than it seemed to be populated with all manner of weird and terrible things. The disappearance of the light seemed to be the signal for the approach of a host of evil monsters. A chorus of hoarse, unearthly voices, loud as the bellowing of a bull, resounded about us in a deep, continuous bass; and throaty gruntings and savage snorts and howlings echoed and droned as though they issued from ten thousand pairs of giant lungs. Dazed with horror, we stared into the unbroken gloom like doomed men; I had visions of colossal eyes smoldering from the blackness, and jaws that shatter and tore, and gnashing teeth that rent and shattered.

But it was not a moment before our dumbfounded inaction was over. Pellmell we flung ourselves toward the submarine, almost failing to find it in the darkness, and tumbling tumultuously over one another in our haste to crowd through the narrow door. Several of the men were shoved accidentally into the water, and Stranahan came in dripping from an unexpected swim; while the Captain walked with a slight limp, newly acquired.

At length, however, we were all safely within the ship, and the doors were barred against the unknown peril. Several of the men, still trembling with terror, were eager to get under way directly; but this idea the Captain emphatically vetoed, declaring that the X-111 was no longer seaworthy. All that we could do now was to try to locate the danger with our searchlights; and accordingly, we wasted no time before switching on our powerful lanterns and revolving them in slow circles that illumined by turns every inch of the boulder-strewn, weedy plain. All in vain. Although the unearthly chorus could be heard even through the closed doors and showed no sign of diminishing, our searchlights revealed nothing that we had not already seen.

For some time we watched and waited—but nothing happened. And at length, turning to us all with a smile, the Captain advised, "Well, boys, we've all had a pretty hard time of it. Suppose we just forget about that racket out there and try to take a little rest."

We were all glad enough to follow the Captain's suggestion. Several of the men were commissioned to take turns standing watch; and the rest of us were not long in seeking much needed sleep. Within a few minutes, the deep and regular breathing from the nearby bunks informed me that my companions had temporarily forgotten the day's adventures.

For my own part, exhausted as I was, I could not so readily find relief. The events not only of the past few hours, but of many months, came trooping before my mind in continuous blurred procession; I was obsessed by my own imaginings, and from a dim half-consciousness, I would awaken time after time to a vivid re-experiencing of some almost forgotten episode. And, strangely enough, my reveries were concerned mainly with a single phase of my life—the phase I was now living. My youth and early manhood might almost not have existed, for all that I remembered of them now; but I did sharply recall how, at the outbreak of war more than a year ago, I had decided abruptly upon the action that had plunged me into my present plight. Resigning my position at Northeastern University, where I had been serving as instructor in classic Greek, I had enlisted

in the navy, and had promptly been sent to an officers' training school, from which I had emerged as Ensign. Friends had commended me upon my patriotism, yet it was not patriotism, but rather the greed for adventure, that had motivated my decision; and now, as I looked back, it seemed ironic to me that my previous uneventful days had been so much more pleasant than any of my adventures. There was, however, one factor which had served to make those days enjoyable, a factor without which even the most active life would be barren indeed—and that factor was one which could have no place in wartime. Frequently, as I tossed and struggled fitfully on my narrow bunk, there flashed before me out of the darkness the blue eyes and laughing face of one whom I could scarcely recall without a pang; and I lived again with Alma Huntley those sparkling days among the Vermont hills, when she was to me all that life was, and I won her promise of devotion among the scented pines and to the music of rippling waters . . . That day was long past, yet how acutely it came back to mind! And how clearly memory brought back a later day, when her cheeks were moist and I held her in a minute-long embrace, and mutual vows and soft murmurings were exchanged, and then there came the sharpness of "Farewell!" and she was gone, lost amid a blur of faces, and I marched sedately on while the world was blotted out in loneliness and grief . . . Oh, why had I left her, plunging thus among these unknown horrors? . . . Fervently, as I lay there listening to the uncanny bellowings from the ghostly world without, I longed to reach out my arms to her, to hold her warmly, to speak to her, and to hear her speak, if only one loved word. . . .

But even the most intense yearning may be blotted out by sleep. And at last, after hours, I lost my memories in unconsciousness—an intermittent unconsciousness, broken by disturbed dreams and vague images of death and disaster. . . .

I OPENED my eyes to find a bright, golden light pouring in through the unshuttered windows. Surprised, I leapt to my feet, and discovered that the great mysterious golden orbs were shining as before from far above, the boulder-strewn plain glimmered as clearly as at first, the massive columns were still fairy-like in their tints of pale pink and blue, while the hideous, bestial noises had unaccountably ceased.

Hastily I dressed and rejoined my companions. I found them gathered about in a little circle, earnestly talking; and they welcomed me gladly into their discussion, the subject of which I at once surmised. For what but our mysterious plight could now occupy our minds and tongues? None of us, as yet, had more than the faintest inkling of where we were or what had befallen us. That we were in some sort of cavern beneath the sea was the belief of the Captain and several of the men, but this region seemed so oddly unlike a cavern that the explanation was not generally accepted; and the more superstitious were inclined to hold that we had been bewitched into some sort of supernatural, goblin realm. For my own part, I could hardly understand how we could be in a submarine cavern without being completely flooded; and much less could I understand how we could be in any known land above seas.

Obviously, the only likely source of information was through exploration. And since it was not possible to conduct any explorations with the aid of the disabled X-111, the Captain took the only other available course—which was to order some of the men to set forth into the Unknown on foot, determine the lay of

the land and return as soon as possible with whatever tidings they might gather.

Stangale and Howlett, being the most experienced veterans, were selected to make the initial attempt. In a few minutes, they set off cheerfully together, equipped with firearms and a day's supply of food and drink, with instructions to return within twenty-four hours at the latest.

Twelve or fifteen hours went by while we waited impatiently; the great golden orbs flashed out as mysteriously as before, and for eight or ten hours we slept; then, upon awakening, we found the lights still shining as brightly as ever, and noted that it was time for the return of our two scouts. But we watched in vain for their arrival. Not a moving thing greeted us from the unchanging, bouldery plain; hours went by; excited speculation gave way to more excited speculation, and wild rumor to still wilder rumor; the suspense became tantalizing, and yet there was nothing to do but wait. Had the men lost their way? or had they met with some disastrous adventure? or had the savage inhabitants of these wild realms seized and imprisoned them? To these questions there was no answer, though many were the conjectures. And when the darkness had fallen upon us once again, and once again we had slept and awakened to find the golden light restored, we knew that it was time to set out in search of the missing ones.

This time the Captain called for volunteers to invade the Unknown, which, as he warned us, might be dangerous beyond all expectations; and after half the crew had offered themselves for the adventure, his choice fell upon Ripley and Stranahan.

It was with genuine regret that I watched these two gallant seamen set forth amid the reeds by the river's brink, to disappear at length among the boulders and behind the great stone columns. Somehow, as I lost sight of them, I had a sense that we might not see them soon again. I was sad as though with a forewarning of disaster; and, as I reflected upon the pitfalls and dangers they might have to face, I experienced more than one twinge of vicarious fear.

Worst of all, my misgivings seemed to be justified by time. Twelve hours passed, and the explorers had not returned; twenty-four hours, and there was still no word from them, though they had been given explicit orders to be back. With grim, set eyes, the Captain stood alone by the river bank, gazing sternly into that wilderness which had already engulfed four of his men; and the rest of the crew stood chattering fearfully among themselves, declaring that this land was "haunted," "spooky," and "thick with devils."

It was curious to note how, in these weird, unknown domains, outworn superstitions were being reborn; how ready the men were to believe in goblins, dragons, sea serpents, werewolves and all manner of fantastic monsters. Even the more enlightened of us seemed about to forget all that civilization had taught us; and, in the failure of all that we had been accustomed to cling to, we were clutching at a savage, terrorizing faith in incredible and ghostly things.

By the time that Stranahan and Ripley had been absent forty-eight hours, the crew was in a state of impatience verging upon madness. The fluttering of a feather would have sent them scampering like frightened horses; the buzzing of a bee might have been the signal for spasms of dread. On one occasion, indeed, the chirping of some cricket-like insect did put half a dozen of the men into a panic; and on another occasion three or four of them turned pale merely upon hearing the swishing and flapping of a small fish in the river.

It was when the excitement was nearing its highest that the Captain called once more for volunteers to search for the missing men. But so deep-rooted and paralyzing was the general alarm that only two of us offered our names—young Phil Rawson and myself. I do not know what strange wave of courage had suddenly emboldened this timorous recruit while less callow men held back; and for my own part, I must admit that I volunteered from the mere desire to escape from ennui and the half-frenzied rabble of my comrades. But, whatever our motives, we were promptly to be launched into adventures that were not only to test our hardihood, but to prove interesting beyond anything we could have imagined.

CHAPTER IV

A Tour of Exploration

RAWSON and I had been gone not half an hour when the aspect of the country began suddenly to change. It was as though we had passed some indistinguishable boundary, for the boulders were rapidly becoming less numerous, and at length disappeared entirely, while at the same time the odd, mossy vegetation became astonishingly rich and profuse. Or, to be precise, it gave place to a different vegetation entirely, an unearthly vegetation, almost too strange for belief. At the risk of being accused of fabrication, I must describe those incredible plants: the creepers with long leaves of lace-like brown, which twined in dainty wreaths and veils about the olive-green boles of limbless trees; the bushes, shaped like starfishes, and of the hue of dried grass, with diaphanous flowers that a breath might have blown away; the cinnamon-brown reeds that rose to double a man's height, ending in a profusion of cucumber-shaped fruits; the peculiar, abundant growth that looked at a distance like a great earthen jar, but proved upon closer examination to be the hollow container of a species of milk-white down that grew in long and silken strands like untended hair.

So dense was the foliage that we would not have been able to force our way through it, and would not have dared to make the attempt, had it not been for a sharply cut path which wound in leisurely curves and undulations close to the river's brink. It was not like one of those paths which nature occasionally plans, or which are due to the tracks of wild beasts, for it had a regularity of design and an evenness of width that proved it to be unmistakably the work of man. Yet what man could have penetrated before us into these uncanny sunless depths? At the mere thought that others might have preceded us we involuntarily shuddered; we were half convinced that we were intruders into a tomb closed ages ago. But despite this conviction, we kept a constant, half-terrified outlook for sign of human presence.

It was not long before our vigilance was rewarded. Abruptly the path before us widened, until it was of the size of a broad highway; and above the dense masses of vegetation, we beheld in astonishment the looming marble pillars of a Grecian colonnade. Toward this the road led in long and graceful curves; and it was but a few minutes before we found ourselves at the entrance of a covered walk or "stoa" that brought back to me vivid memories of "the glory that was Greece." On both sides of us the palely-tinted Ionic columns rose to a majestic height, daintily ornamented at the base with the acanthus design, and curving in symmetrical proportions that brought to mind the perfection of the Parthenon; while the

marble floor on which we walked and the marble ceiling above us were frescoed with figures that seemed drawn bodily from the romance of the ancient world. They were not wholly Greek, I knew, these pictures of sportive mermaids and lightning-hurling gods and dragon-slaying heroes and misty caves of twilight and the throbbing lyre; but there was something suggestively Greek about them all; and steeped as I was in the lore of ancient Hellas, I had the singular feeling that the hand of time had been turned backward two thousand years or more.

This feeling was accentuated when, having followed the covered walk for a distance of several hundred yards, I observed that it led to a magnificent, many-columned edifice which could pass for nothing if not for a temple of the ancient gods. It was a structure of solid marble, white marble artistically varied with veinings of black; its pillars were massive as the trunks of the giant redwoods I had seen in the California forests years before, and like those redwoods, produced an effect of solemnity and awe; but all was so perfectly designed and proportioned that, while the building occupied an area perhaps as large as the average city block, it gave an effect less of magnitude than of artistic completeness and beauty. No living thing was visible about the precincts of this amazing temple, nor would I have expected any living thing in what I had come subconsciously to regard as a realm of the dead; but I was overawed at the thought of this abandoned loveliness, and paused at some distance to regard it reflectively, mentally asking whether it was some still undiscovered survival from classical times or whether I was but seeing a vision.

A suppressed exclamation from young Rawson brought me back to reality—or, at least, to the unbelievable thing that passed for reality. In the very center of the swift-rolling river, the banks of which paralleled the colonnade at a distance of a dozen paces, I observed a low-lying, gliding form, gracefully elevated at both extremes, which at the first terrified glimpse I took to be some fabulous monster, but which I soon recognized as a sort of boat or canoe. Before I had had time for a half-composed glance at it, it had gone speeding out of view; but in its fast-moving frame, I thought I could distinguish half a dozen dusky bobbing shapes, and half a dozen pairs of oars that reached out rhythmically, and noiselessly clove the dark waters. Later, when I had had time for reflection, I was to recognize this strange craft as akin to the shadowy apparition, the unknown sea monster which had so terrified us in the submarine; but at present I was overwhelmed by the knowledge that this weird place was actually peopled, peopled by living men whom at any moment we might meet face to face!

WE had scarcely recovered from this surprise when an even greater one flashed upon us. Out of the windows of the temple, which we had believed long closed to human sound, a strange, thin music began to float, serenely beautiful and of elfin remoteness and charm. . . . And while, entranced, we listened to those magical strains, there came the fluttering of a butterfly gown, and from the temple doors issued a shimmering, dancing form, followed by a score of other dancing, shimmering forms—scarcely human, we believed, so ethereal did they seem in the flashing and waving of arms, the swift rhythm of feet, and the play and interplay of pale blue and gold and pink and lavender and white from their flowing and multi-colored robes. A singular iridescence seemed to overspread them, almost a halo such as

may envisage a goddess; and, gaping and enthralled, we gazed on them as men might gaze on Venus were she to return to earth. Now down the long colonnade they started, tripping toward us with birdlike gestures and the airy unreality of perfect time and movement; and, fearful to disturb the vision by our gross presence, we hid ourselves behind the great stone columns, peeping out furtively as though they might vanish bubble-like at our gaze. But, apparently absorbed in their dance, they continued gracefully toward us, not glancing to right or to left, and catching no hint of our intrusion—until, as the procession drew more near and the charm of the music more compelling, I peered out too incautiously from behind my marble bulwark, and found myself staring full into the face of the most ravishingly beautiful woman I had ever beheld. There was a quality about her face that seemed to mark it as not of the earth; the Madonnas of old paintings have something of that look; and the most perfect womanly bust that sculptor has ever conceived; but there was also a vividness and an animation that no mere painting or statue has ever shared, together with an air of such innocence, such candor and kindness of soul that, had I been a believer in angels, I might have gone down straightway upon my knees.

But all this I beheld in the space between two heartbeats. Even as the vision greeted me it vanished; the beautiful clear eyes were distended with terror upon their first contact with mine; there came a scream of fright, followed by a chorus of screams; then a scurrying of fast-retreating feet, and the bright, fairy-like shapes had vanished, and the empty river flowed silently past the empty colonnade and temple.

CHAPTER V

The Mysterious City

THE next few hours showed us a continuous, amazing panorama. The marble temple proved to be but one of a series connected by long and graceful colonnades; and in the central structures, the Ionic and Doric architecture were curiously mingled with a type that seemed scarcely Grecian at all, since it admitted of all variety of arches and curves unknown to the builders of classical Hellas. Most remarkable of all, perhaps, were the gorgeously ornamented vases—some of them six or eight feet in height—which were of a style akin to those excavated from the ruins of old Ilium. But what caught my eye even more strikingly were the statues that occasionally appeared in niches along the marble galleries or in alcoves of the temples—statues that would surely not have been unworthy of a Praxiteles, since even Praxiteles could not have surpassed the symmetry of form and the unstrained reality of pose and expression with which these unknown artists had depicted their wrestling heroes and dancing fauns and stern-browed old men and queenly maidens and gracious youths. For one who had been nurtured on modern art, these busts and marbles were as old paintings would be to him who had known only sketches in black and white; there was none of that snowy coldness or bronze severity of hue which are so common in sculpture to-day, but all of the statues had been skilfully tinted with the complexion of life, and such was the verisimilitude, that several times I started in surprise on beholding what I took to be a living man but which proved to be only an image of stone. I was interested, moreover, to note that none of the sculptured features had that peculiar hardness and selfish keenness so common among the

men I had known, but that all seemed suffused with a clear and tranquil spirituality; and every lyric impulse within me was awakened when I observed on many of the faces of the women that same unearthly Madonna look which had graced the butterfly-gowned dancing maiden.

But, of course, Rawson and I did not allow our pleasure in the statuary to keep our minds from more vital subjects. Above all, we maintained a constant lookout for the inhabitants of these queer regions, for we could no longer suppress the suspicion that unseen furtive eyes were peeping out at us from behind every pillar and wall. For my own part, I had more than one qualm that I did not care to admit, and secretly wished myself back on the X-111; and as for Rawson—I found that youth afflicted with far too much imagination for an adventurer, and repeatedly begged him to keep his fantastic fears to himself.

But there was no repressing the excitable young Rawson. When he was not drawing pictures of the serpents and wild beasts that probably infested the thickets beside the temples, he would be diverting me with the most greswome ghost stories I had ever heard; and he went so far as to suggest that the dancing girls had been only airy apparitions, while the brilliant golden lights above us had no more reality than a will-o'-the-wisp. Evidently he had been too much nurtured on fiction of the blood-and-terror variety, for only a devotee of the most hectic adventure tales could have imagined, as he did, that our pathway was beset with robbers' lairs, pirates' dens, scorpions and crocodiles, head-hunting cannibals, siren women luring us to destruction, and murderous desperados of a thousand ilk and guilds.

Fortunately for my peace of mind, I heard not half of Rawson's ravings, for my interest in the way-side architecture served as a distraction. For two or three hours I was occupied with inspecting the gracefully connecting galleries of five or six temples; and, having passed the last of the group, I was absorbed in my observations of a long, marble colonnade which extended apparently for miles in a straight line amid the gray and brown fantastic vegetation.

And now it was that I made the most startling discovery of the day. At intervals along the floor of the colonnade, which was of a red and yellow mosaic of baked and hardened clay, appeared deeply-graven inscriptions which I paused eagerly to survey. At first I thought that they were in no known language, but it was not long before I had detected a certain resemblance between the characters and those of the ancient Greek. Profiting from my collegiate study of that tongue, I puzzled over the words while Rawson stood by impatiently urging me to be off; and one by one I succeeded in identifying the letters with those of the Greek alphabet! Not every one of the characters, it is true, could be recognized with assurance, but enough of them were unmistakably Greek to give me a clue to the whole; and at length I found myself making a translation that might solve the entire mystery of this extraordinary land.

BUT the process was a slow and plodding one, and I did not make the progress I had expected. Even though the letters were clear enough, the meaning of the words was not. Evidently this was not the Greek of Plato or Thucydides, in which I had been thoroughly schooled; but rather it was a language that was to classical Greek what Chaucer is to modern English. Still, I was not completely discouraged, for I did manage to make out an occasional word, though not at first enough to give meaning to any passage. All

in all, considering the limited time at my disposal, my efforts seemed futile; and I was about to yield to Rawson's importunities and give up this diverting study for further exploration, when suddenly I made a successful discovery. I must have come upon a passage simpler than the rest, for unexpectedly half a sentence flashed upon me with clear-cut meaning at once so striking and so enigmatical that I stopped short with a little cry of surprise.

"Placed here in the year Three Thousand of the Submergence," ran the words, which occurred in large lettering at the base of a statue of a strong man trampling down the ruins of what looked like a steel building. "Placed here . . ." at this point were several words that I could not make out—"in celebration of the Good Destruction."

"In celebration of the Good Destruction!" I repeated, after translating the words aloud. "Sounds as if written by a madman!"

"Maybe you didn't read it right," commented Rawson.

This suggestion, of course, I ignored. "Wonder what the Submergence can mean," I continued, meditatively. "That doesn't seem to make sense, either."

"No, it doesn't," Rawson admitted, with a thoughtful drawl. "Everything down here seems sort of topsy-turvy. Suppose we go on and see what else we can find out."

I nodded a hesitating assent, and we proceeded on our way in silence. But, though we did not speak, our thoughts were active indeed, for more than ever I was convinced that somehow, unaccountably, we were amid the remains of a Grecian or pre-Grecian countryside. Had Socrates or the radiant Phoebus himself stepped out of the grave to greet me, I would not have been surprised; and I more than half expected to catch a glimpse of Athena's robe from behind the dark shrubbery, or to see the winged feet of Hermes or hear the clear notes of Pan.

But neither Pan nor Hermes nor any of their famed kindred presented themselves upon the scene. And after walking at a good pace for more than an hour along the marble colonnade, I forgot those interesting individuals in contemplation of a scene that left me gaping in greater astonishment than if I had invaded a council of the high Olympian gods. For some minutes a series of huge-templed domes and columns, dimly visible through rifts in the vegetation, had attracted my attention and aroused Rawson's misgivings; but neither of us had had any intimation of the sight that was to greet us when at length we came to the end of the colonnade.

Suddenly we saw a clay road sloping down sharply beneath us, and found ourselves gazing out over a valley more dazzling than we had ever before known or imagined. Through its center flowed the great river, with gentle loops and twinings; above us, as before, reached the dark-green sky, illumined with the golden suns; and an innumerable multitude of palely tinted columns, like the tree trunks of some colossal forest, shot upward to that sky as though to support it. But what were truly remarkable were the buildings that adorned the plain. On both sides of the river they stretched, far to the distance and out of sight, palaces of white marble and of black marble, of jade and of alabaster, some with an elegant symmetry of Greek columns, some with a solidity of masonry that seemed half Egyptian, some with an almost Oriental profusion of spires and turrets, of porticoes and balconies and arches and domes. But all alike were reared in perfect taste, and with perfect regard to the style of their neighbors; all alike faced

in wide avenues, flowery lanes or lawns and statue-dotted parks; all appeared but parts of a single design which, when seen from above, was like some consummate tapestry patterned by a master artist.

As Rawson and I stood staring at this matchless scene, I suddenly recalled the steeples and towers of that city we had seen beneath us in the submarine. A strange similarity in the outlines of the buildings impressed itself upon me—then in a flash it came to me that the two cities were one and the same! And at that instant I shuddered, amazed and horrified at the abrupt solution of the mystery. . . . It was as the Captain had suggested; we were indeed beneath the ocean, thousands of feet beneath the ocean, in some cavern inexplicably spared from the waters and haunted by the ghosts and relics of some ancient and vanished race!

CHAPTER VI

The Temple of the Stars

FAR from echoing the agitation I felt, Rawson seemed actually pleased at the turn of events. It piqued his imagination to think that we should be so far beneath the sea; and he conjured up all manner of alluring possibilities that testified more to his youth than to his common sense. He suggested that we were the discoverers of a great and magnificent empire which we should explore, conquer and then annex to the United States; and he formed his plans regardless of the probability that we should never see the United States again, and almost as though there were regular transportation facilities to the upper world. The sheer scientific difficulties—the apparent impossibility that a cavern free from water could exist beneath the ocean, the even more striking impossibility that human beings could inhabit such a cavern—seemed to make little impression upon the illogical mind of Rawson; and he was convinced that only by the rarest good fortune had we been entombed in these fantastic and dream-like depths.

So intense was his enthusiasm, that he urged me to descend at once with him to the many-templed city. But I did not willingly accede; I pointed out that it would be wiser to hasten back to the submarine, inform Captain Gavison of what we had seen, and return here—if we returned at all—in greater numbers than at present. Besides, as I reminded Rawson, the Captain had ordered us back within twenty-four hours; and, if we dallied, some mischance might delay us until too late.

Had Rawson but had a dim prevision of the black hours ahead, he would certainly have accepted my suggestions. But, perversely enough, he seemed to be almost without his usual fears, just when those fears might have proved most useful. And since of course I could not allow myself to be outdone in bravery by a mere boy, I had to signify a grudging assent to his proposal. I must confess, however, that my motives were not unmixt, for pictures of the iridescent dancing girl kept flitting before my mind and would give me no peace; and I may have had hopes (I will not say that I did) of meeting her again in this city of fountains and palaces.

But not a living creature could be seen stirring in the avenues of that strange town as Rawson and I began our slow descent. Once or twice we thought we saw the glimmer of a light or the flash of some moving thing in the far distance, but we could not be sure; and the silence and the immobility gave the general effect of a city of the dead. There was some-

thing ghostly about that calm, still atmosphere, something that might have made me turn back in alarm had it not been for the presence of Rawson; but there was also something soothingly peaceful,—a charmed quiet that brought to mind the fairy tales I had heard in childhood, and in particular that enchanted palace where the Sleeping Beauty had slumbered for a hundred years. Here, I thought, one might dream away a hundred years or a thousand, and never know that time had passed at all; here, conceivably, the ancient world might lapse into the modern, and the modern into the far future without apparent change.

My reveries were interrupted by our arrival at the gates of the city. We passed beneath a high arch almost Roman in style, with marble base and façade ornamented with strange blue sea-shells; then, proceeding along a winding cement walk inlaid with mother-of-pearl, we approached the most stately palace of all. In architecture, it was totally dissimilar to anything we had ever before observed: although perhaps five hundred feet in length, it was as much like a great statue as like a building; it had none of those features common in edifices for the shelter of man and his works, but seemed to have been erected exclusively as a piece of art. Its form was that of a woman, a woman reclining at full length, her breast to the ground, her head slightly elevated, propped meditatively upon her palm; and the structure as a whole had been planned with such subtlety and skill, with such consummate attention to every detail of the woman's position, form and garments and to the beatific and yet lifelike expression of the face, that Rawson and I could only pause in bewildered silence and stare and stare as though this work had been created through no human agency but by some super-human master hand.

In that first spellbound moment, it did not occur to us that there might be an entrance to the palace. But at length, where a lock of the woman's dark, sculptured hair fell across her breast, we noted a little doorway so skillfully concealed that it had originally escaped our attention. Since the gate swung wide upon the hinges, curiosity, of course, prompted us to glance within—and with results that proved but a further spur to curiosity. All that we could see was a pale, golden glitter against a background of black; but imagination supplied that which our physical sight could not reveal, and we had visions of gorgeous halls and corridors which we longed to inspect.

HAD our courage been sufficient, we would have entered at once. The idea, in fact, came to both of us simultaneously, but at first neither of us could summon up the requisite boldness. There seemed to be something mysteriously, almost irresistibly, attractive about that twinkling darkness, something that held us fascinated and forbade us to leave; and for several minutes we stood hesitating, and straining our eyes, yet making no motion to invade the unknown.

Then, when the suspense had become so protracted as to be ridiculous, Rawson surprised me by exclaiming, suddenly, "I'm not afraid!" And at the same time he slapped his sides energetically as though to prove to himself that he had no fears. "I'm going right in!" he announced, with what I thought to be unnecessary loudness. And, feeling for his revolver with a hand that trembled perceptibly, Rawson strode resolutely into the building.

There was nothing for me to do but follow. But, somehow, I could not help wishing that my friend had not been so rash; and, somehow, I foresaw that we

might not be able to leave this strange edifice so easily as we had entered.

But, once within, we forgot our misgivings in contemplation of the magnificent scene around us. I had been in luxurious galleries before; I had seen the most ornate salons of the Old World, and the most lavishly bedecked of mosques and cathedrals; but never had I viewed or imagined so utterly sublime a hall. Here was a new art of the interior decorator, an art that seemed wholly without parallel in human experience; I was scarcely conscious that I was indoors, but rather felt myself to be in the open, in the open at night, under the wide and glittering heavens, with the light of innumerable stars above me, and the dim cloudy arch of the Milky Way. How the artist had produced his effect was more than I could say, but somehow, in his limited space, he had given the impression of vastness and distance, of the mystery and infinite silence of the starlight; and as I stood there entranced, I could almost imagine that I was back again on earth, gazing out into the night-skies as I had gazed so often from the Vermont hills with Alma Huntley. . . . And yet, perfectly patterned as they were, these skies were not the skies I had known. As I stood there watching, I became aware that certain of the constellations were slightly, almost indistinguishably out of position, the stars not quite in their proper relations to one another—and why this was, I could not attempt to say. But more striking was another alteration that had been wrought deliberately and with subtle artistry: above the stars, and about the thin girdle of the Milky Way, were filmy formations of light, which—perhaps it was only my imagination—gradually resolved themselves into tenuous human figures. One, an exquisitely graceful woman, seemed to be playing upon some lyre-like instrument; another, a youth with head uplifted as though in enraptured contemplation, impressed me as the spirit of all human aspiration; and still others, no less consummately outlined, appeared to represent the hopes and loves and immortal yearnings of man.

But while I remained rooted there in ecstatic contemplation, filled with wonder at the paradox of beholding the stars thousands of feet beneath the sea, there occurred one of those changes by which occasionally a beautiful dream becomes distorted into a nightmare. Imagine the consternation of one who, while gazing at the cloudless night-skies, finds blackness suddenly sweeping all about him—a blackness that has quenched the stars as a storm might quench a candle flame. Such consternation was ours, and even greater horror, for without so much as a flicker of warning, the lights of the seeming heavens flashed out, and darkness stretched above us and all about us, a darkness so all-consuming that not even a shadow remained. With half-suppressed cries of terror, Rawson and I turned to one another, each totally invisible in the blank night; and before we had had time for coherent speech, there came a rattling and a slamming from behind us, and we knew that the one possible exit had been closed and that we were prisoners in this unknown place.

CHAPTER VII

Trapped

FOR a moment we were like rats newly trapped. All trace of reason left us in our sudden furious terror; we began to scurry blindly to and fro, to and fro in the darkness, panic-stricken in our frenzy to escape. Where we were dashing we did not know,

nor whether we might not be rushing into greater peril still; we collided more than once with the unseen walls, stumbled over invisible objects on the floor, and went fumbling about in long loops and circles—but all to no avail. The marvel is not that we accomplished nothing, but that we did not break our necks, for so utterly fear-maddened were we that it was minutes before we had any thought of ceasing our mad perambulations and considering our predicament calmly and rationally.

If I can judge aright from my confused memories of those terrible moments, it was the sound of a heavy body falling that shocked me back to my senses. The fall, which was thudding and resonant, was accompanied by a suppressed oath, which seemed to issue from far to my rear, but which none the less sounded familiar.

"Rawson!" I cried, stopping short, and forgetting caution in my alarm. "Are you hurt?"

"No, I'm not hurt," came the drawled reply, as though from a tremendous distance. And then, after a groan, "No, I'm all right."

"Where are you?" I yelled back. "How can I get to you?"

Rawson shouted directions, and I went groping toward him. The process was by no means easy, for I was guided wholly by the senses of touch and hearing, and more than once I came into painful contact with some unforeseen obstacle. But after some minutes I found myself grasping a solid, yielding mass which I recognized as the arm of my friend.

Rawson was as glad as I of our reunion. Somehow, now that we were together again, we both felt much stronger and the unknown foe seemed less redoubtable. Yet that foe seemed terrible enough as we sat there on the floor conversing in whispers. Although we had regained some slight composure, the falling of a pin might have sent us off into convulsions; and our imaginations were busy painting grotesque and shadowy horrors.

"What can it mean?" murmured Rawson, as he sat with his hand upon my knee, as though to reassure himself by the mere physical fact of my presence. "What do you think it can mean?"

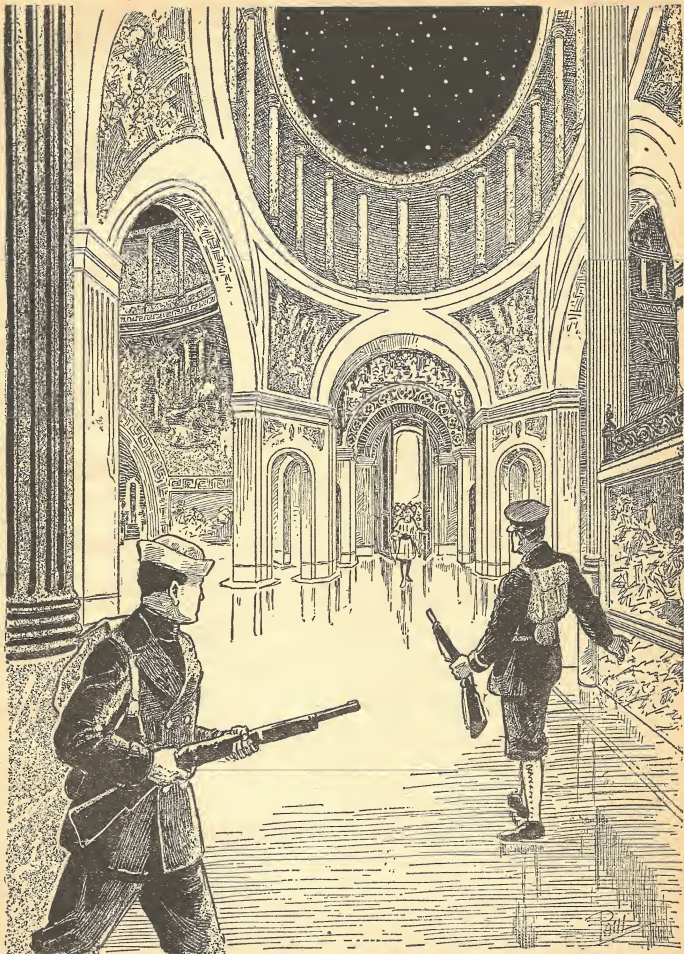
I declined to venture any direct reply, although suggestions sufficiently dreadful were piling up in my brain.

"Remember how Stranahan and the others were lost," continued Rawson, solemnly, as if the explanation of their disappearance were now self-evident.

"I don't see what that has to do with us," I argued. And then, with a forced attempt at bravado, "Don't worry, Rawson. Chances are everything will turn out all right."

"I hope so," conceded Rawson, in a tone indicating that he rather wished things would turn out badly. And, by way of fanning my courage, he entertained me with the most ghastly stories he could imagine—stories of men trapped in coal mines, men lost in labyrinthine caves, men entombed in deep pits or immured in lightless dungeons. To all these tales I listened with growing uneasiness, meanwhile racking my mind to remember a parallel to our own predicament. But I could think of nothing that even remotely resembled it; and, having nothing to say, I answered Rawson only in monosyllables.

Perhaps owing to the terseness of my replies—or perhaps because of the terror of our plight—his loquacious mood soon deserted him. It was not long before we had lapsed into silence; and it was minutes before either of us spoke again. Meantime the darkness was so intense, the silence so complete and the stillness so



Half a dozen of the queerest beings we had ever seen came crowding into our path . . . from the blank, amazed stares with which they greeted us, it was evident that our appearance was as much a surprise to them as theirs was to us. But from a certain sternness and resolution which invested their faces following the first speechless astonishment, we concluded that they had probably seen others of our kind, and were not disposed to treat us leniently.

absolute that I was persecuted with all manner of fantastic fears. What unknown horrors were brewing in these serene depths? What grotesque or malevolent or even murderous things? In my anxiety, I peopled the gloom with monstrous shapes of a thousand varieties, with slimy, crawling serpents, with lithe, crouching panthers, with great apes whose brawny arms could strangle a man, and—worst of all—with slinking, barbarous humans that crept up slyly to seize and stab one in the dark.

By degrees my imaginings were becoming so grown-some that I could no longer endure them. And, merely to find relief from myself, I whispered, "Come, Rawson, it's senseless to sit here doing nothing. Maybe we can find some exit, if only we look carefully enough. What do you say? Shall we try anyhow?"

"I say it's a good idea," assented Rawson, rising cautiously to his feet.

Without a word I followed his example, and for the next half hour we groped laboriously along the walls, which we found to be of an ice-cold stone, as smooth as polished marble, absolutely perpendicular and apparently without a flaw or break. Our movements were slow and even agonizing, for the blackness was still unbroken, and in that hushed, mysterious place, the slightest sound would send sharp tremors running down our spines. Even the grating of our own shoes against the floor seemed to take on a sinister, uncanny meaning; the whispered tones of our own voices seemed unhallowed and ghostly; while the occasional rapping of our fists against the walls or our clattering contact with some unseen obstacle sent the echoes ringing and reverberating with unearthly, hollow notes until our overwrought nerves quivered at the rustling of our clothing or at the sound of our own breath.

Possibly two or three times we encircled that great hall—in the darkness it was impossible to tell where our starting place had been—but we could find no indication of any passageway or door. And at length, exhausted by the strain, we crouched on the floor near the wall and waited miserably for something to happen. Almost anything that could have happened—no matter how grim and terrible—would have been a relief; but the quiet was undisturbed, while we sat tense and alert, with fast-throbbing hearts, and eyes that searched and searched the gloom in vain. Neither of us spoke now; and the garrulous Rawson seemed wrapped up in his own dismal thoughts. How long a period passed thus I cannot say; my watch may have recorded whole hours, but certainly my thoughts recorded whole years, for I have lived years that knew less of suspense, uneasiness and dread.

But at last, after endless waiting, relief came with disconcerting suddenness. As though by the turning of an electric switch, a dazzlingly brilliant light flashed into view above us—a light that contrasted strangely with the stars of some hours before, and that shone blindingly in a pale blue field like the sun in the cloudless heavens. Then, while we stood shading our eyes from the glaring illumination, we observed just opposite us, the gate through which we had doubtless entered. And with surprise we noted that it moved slowly upon its hinges; that slowly and as if by magic it made clear the way of escape!

"The place is enchanted!" muttered Rawson, in dazed fascination. "Come, let's get out of here!"

But when, overjoyed at our rescue, we started toward the gate, an unexpected obstacle intruded. Half a dozen of the queerest beings we had ever seen came crowding into our path—tall, butterfly-like creatures

with faces almost waxen pale and long capes and robes of pink and blue and lavender and yellow pastel tints. All had long, flowing light red or golden hair which reached at least to the shoulders; one, apparently the oldest, wore an ample beard, but the majority were smooth shaven; none had headgear of any type, and all were shod with sandals covered with green moss, above which for several inches the unclothed legs were visible. From the blank, amazed stares with which they greeted us, it was evident that our appearance was as much a surprise to them as theirs was to us. But from a certain sternness and resolution which invested their faces following the first speechless astonishment, we concluded that they had probably seen others of our kind, and were not disposed to treat us leniently.

We noted also that, though quivering with dread, they kept the exit firmly blocked. And in the long, staring silence that ensued, we felt in dismay that at last we had met the masters of this strange land; and with sinking hearts we realized that our chances of escape had vanished.

CHAPTER VIII

Sapphire and Amber

IT may have been no more than thirty seconds before the silence was broken, though it felt like many, many minutes. But at length one of the newcomers, turning to his companions, the while keeping his eyes still fastened upon us, began to speak in low, rhythmic tones that were singularly musical and pleasant. I could catch not one syllable of what he said, though I strained my ears in the attempt; nor could I understand any syllable of what his fellows spoke in reply, though their voices too were so soft and sweet-sounding that they might have been intoning poetry. Yet, in spite of the gentleness of their voices, I could detect a certain excitement in their manner; and, from their casual nods and gestures in our direction, I was only too certain of the theme of their discussion.

After several minutes of whispered conversation, one of the strangers stepped toward us and raised his voice as if addressing us. As might have been foretold, I understood nothing of what he said; and, as this was no doubt what he expected, he did not look surprised, but after a moment ceased speaking and motioned us to follow him.

Since there was manifestly nothing else to do, we obeyed readily enough, and were glad indeed to find ourselves stepping once more through the doorway and out into the street, even though the half dozen strangers had grouped themselves on all sides of us as a sort of bodyguard. We knew, in fact, that we were virtually prisoners, and yet were no longer alarmed, for no imprisonment could be worse than that which we had already suffered. Also, we had an intuitive sense that we should not be badly treated; whether out of consideration for our feelings or merely because they were afraid of us, our attendants did not attempt to lay hands on us or to coerce us in any way. Yet when they indicated by gestures the direction in which they desired us to walk, we had no thought of objecting, but obeyed as docilely as though they were our acknowledged masters.

For a distance of possibly two or three miles they led us with them through the city streets; and far from brooding over our predicament (which was manifestly serious), we amused ourselves with observing the sights of the town. Dozens of the inhabitants

had come out to peer at us as we strode past; and, though they kept at a cautious distance, we could see them clearly enough: their slender, graceful forms and blond features, their amiable blue eyes and rippling unbound hair, their loose-hanging, light-tinted robes, variously colored from buff and lilac to azure and pale rose, gave them the appearance less of human beings than of walking butterflies or flowers.

But even more interesting to us was the architecture of the town. We were fascinated, first of all, by the very pavement beneath us, which was of baked clay worked into a multihued and picturesque mosaic; we were still more fascinated by the buildings, which on close observation proved to be even more artistically designed than we had imagined, for exquisite little statues abounded in niches between the columns or under the domes and spires, and superb frescoes decorated the ceilings of the numberless colonnades and the outside walls of temples, and curving walks wound gracefully between terraces adorned with a lovely waxen flower or around the brink of the shimmering rainbowed fountains. I particularly noted the width of the avenues, in whose spacious reaches and wide adjoining courts the bright-robed children laughed and played; and I was surprised to observe that the buildings, instead of being jammed together in the modern box-like fashion, were each separated from their neighbors by broad paved ways or wide patches of vegetation, so that the whole gave an uncrowded and leisurely and yet skilfully patterned effect.

But magnificent as were the edifices in their garb of sandstone or granite or many-hued marble, the most extraordinary by far was that to which our guides ultimately led us. It was not the size of the structure that distinguished it, since the city boasted far larger buildings, and size in itself did not seem to have been an object with the builders; but the quality of the masonry and the style of the workmanship had surely no parallel in human experience. For the walls and the interior circles of columns were not of any material ever employed before, not of steel or of stone, of brick or of clay, or gold or of ebony; they were of a translucent yellow hue, the hue of amber, and seemed to be composed, if not actually of amber, at least of glass tinted amber color. This, however, was scarcely the most remarkable fact, for the floor was likewise translucent, and shone with an entrancing blue, the blue of sapphire; and sapphire seemed also the substance of the fretted and vaulted ceiling, from which hung images of great birds with wide-spread wings, giving a startling illusion of flight. Three successive circles of columns, each more massive than the last and all adorned at the base with bas-reliefs of strange fishes and stranger sea plants, supported the great arching expanse of the roof; and completely enclosed by the columns, on a steep and curving incline of the sapphire floor, were row after row of amber seats grouped in a half circle about a flat open space, and forming—so it seemed to me—a Grecian theatre of unique design.

AS Rawson and I accompanied our guides into this queer building, we were so captivated by the architecture and so enthralled by the silence and the weird half-light of sapphire and amber that we did not at first observe that other human beings had preceded us into the place. It was long, indeed, before we could recover from the awed sense of entering some cathedral where all is reverential and unworldly; and it was long before, turning our eyes upon the theatre with its rows and rows of seats, we observed that

not all the chairs were vacant as we had at first assumed. In the front tiers sat perhaps a hundred light-gowned individuals whose sedate and earnest faces proclaimed that they were convened for some solemn purpose.

Our arrival was greeted by a sudden murmuring of low, musical voices, but by nothing more demonstrative; and our presence was doubtless explained by our attendants, who spoke a few words to the assembled group, after which they took seats to one side and motioned us to do likewise. We obeyed readily enough, but as I crossed the room to take my designated place, I received a sudden shock, an electrical shock of pleasure, such as one experiences upon meeting a friend unexpectedly in a strange city. In the foremost row, staring up at me with a most curious and kindly air, sat that enchanting woman whom I had seen dancing along the colonnades! As a sober and practical man, and one already in love with the gracious Alma Huntley, I should no doubt have regarded her with a wholly aloof and impersonal air; but I was sadly impressionable, alas! and was almost transfixed with joy at sight of those shining Madonna features and clear magnetic, great blue eyes. For an instant, indeed, I actually stopped short in my tracks, until, regaining my presence of mind, I hastened toward my seat shamefaced at having so betrayed myself. It was several minutes before I ventured again to glance toward the fair one, and then she was looking in an opposite direction; and, stare at her as I might, she seemed totally oblivious of my existence.

I am afraid that, in the ensuing hour, my thoughts were more on her than on proceedings in the theatre. I was aware, indeed, that some sort of debate was in progress, a discussion in which most of the spectators took part and during which Rawson and I were more than once pointed out with significant gestures. But, since I could understand not one word of what was spoken, I let my imagination travel to the beautiful unknown, and tried to fancy how it would feel to be befriended by so fairy-like a creature. Even to speak a word with her, I thought, would be a delight, and to hold a conversation with her would be the rarest of good fortune. Of course, her face might belie her character, and she might be unintelligent as she was beautiful; yet I was convinced that a rare soul shone out of the calm seductive depths of her eyes, and was more than willing to believe that she combined the wisdom of a Socrates with the charms of an Aphrodite.

So pleasantly was I occupied in contemplating this fascinating being and her scarcely less fascinating fellows, that it seemed but a moment before the debate was over and the assembled men and women rose from their seats and began to depart. With a start I sprang to my feet, suddenly realizing that the assemblage had perhaps reached some critical decision regarding me. And when four or five of the men approached Rawson and myself and motioned us away, imprisonment.

The loveliest and fairest of all women had now been lost to view amid the crowd, and I was sadder at her disappearance than at thought of my personal sufferings; but as I walked slowly out of that sapphire and amber palace, gentle strains of music began to play on unseen instruments, rippling delightfully as waves on a calm sea; and gradually and insensibly I was comforted.

Somehow I was convinced that I should see that glorious womanly apparition again.

ONCE more we were escorted through the city streets, but this time had only a few hundred yards to walk. After a minute or two we were led up the steps of a many-columned marble mansion, and into a long hall whose stained glass windows cast a subdued illumination upon a score of vivid paintings. We were wondering what to do, when our guides motioned us to cushioned seats that seemed made of woven seaweed; and after we had settled ourselves at ease in the great sofa-like chairs, two of the men disappeared momentarily and returned with a feast of some singular substance reminding me of mushrooms flavored with a sprinkling of honey. At first we were suspicious and reluctant to eat; but the honest and frankly puzzled faces of our hosts convinced us of our folly; and we found the dish, while strange to our palates, not only appetizing but invigorating after our long fast.

After we had eaten and the remains of the meal had been borne away, we were treated to a still greater surprise. A man came stalking in laden with five or six variously colored cloths, which I recognized as the native costumes; and, having spread these out before us, he motioned us to discard our own clothing and take our choice of the local apparel. Our attendants then politely withdrew, leaving us more perplexed than ever.

But it was long before we could make up our minds to array ourselves in the native garb. And while we stood hesitating, casting occasional disdainful glances at the colored garments before making the decision which we knew we ultimately must make, our attention was distracted by the paintings that adorned the walls. Although all were executed with the deft and flawless hand of a master, they were in a sense different from any paintings I had ever seen before; and what struck me in particular was not so much their peculiar style of art, which combined a minute realism with an almost cosmic suggestiveness, as their arresting and unparalleled subject-matter. Half of them were of a marine type, and depicted ocean caves where the giant squid or octopus wavered through the gray depths, or gardens of the ocean floor where the many-branching coral was the playground for shimmering blue and yellow fishes; the other half, and the most remarkable by far, portrayed scenes of ruin and destruction on a scale that might have staggered the most daring imagination. One of them, for example, pictured a city with slender skyscrapers not unlike those of modern New York, but all the skyscrapers were crumpled and toppling as though from some titanic blast; another, which likewise represented a many-spired city, showed the ocean rolling up in one colossal wave and battering and washing away the buildings as a rain storm may wash away a child's sand castles; while a third, and by all odds the most ghastly of the group, depicted a sea bottom strewn with the wreckage of great stone edifices, in whose vacant towers and windows and among whose shattered courts the sword-fish and the eel sported and slunk and the fanged shark pursued its prey.

"Strange!" I remarked to Rawson. "What peculiarly morbid people is this that its artists should delight in scenes of flood and ruin? Or is it that its painters are striving to represent some actual disaster, some overwhelming ancient catastrophe unheard of on earth?"

Hoping to find an answer to these questions, I strained my eyes over the inscriptions that marked each picture—inscriptions in the near-Greek characters I had already tried to decipher. As before, I had at first no success in translation; but, having

nothing else to do, I persevered; and once again I ended by construing two or three words—words that left me only more deeply mystified. "After the Submergence," was the legend that explained the picture of the ruined town at the sea bottom; and, noting how closely this phrase resembled those I had previously interpreted, I was forced to conclude that "The Submergence" was indeed some definite historical event. But when it had occurred or how was still a question as unanswerable as though it had concerned the planet Mars.

"It is possible that we will never be able to solve the problem," I was observing to Rawson, when suddenly I heard that which made me stop short in amazement, momentarily forgetting all about tidal waves and sunken cities.

"Saints in heaven, that's a good one! That's the time I put one over on you, boys!" came to me in indistinct tones, accompanied by a loud guffaw; and Rawson and I stared at one another in astonishment, bewildered as men who have seen a ghost.

"Stranahan!" we cried in one voice; and the tears were ready to flow at the thought that we had found our lost companion.

A moment later, having made our way through a columned hallway into an adjoining room, we were met by the strangest sight we had yet seen in this land of many wonders.

Sprawled haphazard on the floor, absorbed in the distribution of a pack of cards, were our four lost fellow seamen, all of them looking grotesque indeed in their colored native garments, and Stranahan appearing particularly outlandish in his gown of pale green, his trouser legs showing from beneath, his blue sailor's blouse conspicuous through the open neck in front!

CHAPTER IX

The Will of the Masters

"LORD have mercy on me, if it ain't Harkness! And Rawson, too!" cried Stranahan, leaping to his feet, and seizing our hands in a hearty grip. "By all things holy, I thought I'd never see you again!"

For a moment we were unable to reply, so great was the confusion of shouts, greetings, and excited questionings from our four new-found companions. Though we were fully as delighted as they, our first words came in inchoate, mumbled phrases, for our surprise was apparently even greater than theirs.

"Well, and what are you doing in this part of the country?" Stranahan at length inquired, with a smile. "I thought you were safe in the old X-111."

"Nothing is safe in the X-111," I replied. "Captain Gavison sent us out after you when you didn't come back."

"I'm sorry to hear that," declared Stranahan, ruefully. "You know I hate to disobey orders, but I'm afraid I'll have to. We won't be coming back just yet."

"What makes you think that?" I demanded, with sudden misgivings.

"I don't think it—I know it," he maintained, with an air of certainty. And leaning on one foot against a marble column while his brawny hand stroked his chin, he continued, ruminatingly, "Suffering sea snakes, do you take me for a fool? Do you think I'd be here if I could find a way out?"

"But can't you?" I questioned, innocently.

"No, by the devil, I can't!" he swore. "Neither can you! We're all prisoners here!"

"What? Prisoners in this building," I gasped.

"No, not in this building! In this town!" corrected Stranahan.

"In this town?" Despite my agitation, I began to laugh. "This town makes a fair-sized jail."

"You won't think so for long!" warned Stranahan, with all the fury of conviction. "The Lord strike my heart from my breast if I ever saw a deader place—except maybe my own home town on Sunday afternoons!"

Following this outburst, Stranahan recounted his recent experiences, which were not altogether different from our own. Like us, he and Ripley had reached the city following an ambling excursion among the outlying colonnades and temples; but unlike us, they had not been so unfortunate as to be trapped in one of the buildings. In fact, they had suffered a different misfortune entirely. Upon entering the city, they had been confronted by several of the natives; and, surmising that these strange beings were hostilely disposed, the terrified Stranahan had whipped out his revolver and fired toward the crowd. So far as was known, no one had been injured, but all had been badly frightened by the report; and for a while, the two seamen had had the freedom of the town.

They were ultimately stopped, however, by a band of determined-looking natives. Though apparently unarmed, and though they used no violence, these men overpowered the intruders in some inexplicable way. Not only were Stranahan and Ripley deprived of their pistols, but they were rendered docile as children, and were conducted, as we had been, to the palace of amber and sapphire, where a hundred pale-robed individuals debated and passed on their fate. Next they were brought to their present dwelling, where they were clothed and fed, and where they were reunited with Stangale and Howlett, who had preceded them to the city. They had now been living here for several days, and during that time had been treated with unexpected civility and kindness and even allowed to roam at will through the city; but whenever they had approached the boundaries of the town, they had encountered a band of citizens who, by shouts and gestures and a mysterious but irresistible power of suggestion, had given them to understand that they were not to leave.

Stranahan was approaching the end of his recital, and was telling us how he had been compelled to wear the native costume and how his meals had been brought to him regularly twice each day, when he was interrupted by the entrance of several natives, who had been looking for us in the adjoining room and seemed a little annoyed at our disappearance. Unceremoniously they led us back to the other apartment, where the half dozen robes were lying in wait for us; and, perceiving from their gestures that we would do well to don the native garb, I promptly arrayed myself in a gown of pale lavender, while Rawson exchanged his sailor's suit for a costume of daintiest yellow. Both of us had difficulty in adjusting the garments, which were fastened at the shoulder by a fish-bone device resembling a safety-pin; and we had our hesitation about the sandals, which were slipped on at a stroke and yet were held firmly in place by inconspicuous cords. But though we puzzled over our new apparel for many minutes, Rawson found in the end that he had his on inside out, while the front of mine was where the rear should have been. Of course, we did not discover these mistakes for ourselves. Our attendants, on returning to see us fully attired, indicated the errors with smiles and suppressed laughter; and with their aid, we managed

to array ourselves almost like self-respecting natives.

FORTUNATELY, we had little time just then to notice how ridiculous we looked in our colored gowns. As soon as the perplexing business of dressing was settled, one of the men motioned me to a sofa in a corner of the room, where he took a seat beside me as though for some important purpose; and a second similarly led Rawson to an opposite corner, while the other natives unceremoniously took their leave. My particular attendant, who was a tall man, neither young nor old, with classic features and keen but kindly gray eyes peering from beneath a wide expanse of forehead, now began to go through a series of apparently meaningless gestures, accompanied by no less meaningless words. First, he would tap his head while emitting a peculiar sound; then he would tap his breast while emitting another peculiar sound; then he would touch his arm, his knee, his foot, always slowly and carefully pronouncing one or two unintelligible syllables. In the beginning, I was inclined to wonder whether he was not mad, but this view was not furthered by the discovery that Rawson's attendant was conducting a similar performance. It was doubtless only my own stupidity that prevented me from grasping the truth immediately. At length my companion drew a small pad of paper from his pocket and began to write upon it with an instrument resembling a fountain pen, and I understood clearly enough then that he was trying to teach me his language; so I gave him my undivided attention, noting carefully each object he touched and the corresponding sounds, and observing particularly the characters he jotted down upon the paper.

Then suddenly I saw light amid the darkness! Although this was but my first lesson, I was making faster progress than either of us could have anticipated—my knowledge of ancient Greek was proving invaluable! At the first glance, I observed the resemblance between the letters my instructor was inditing and those of the old Greek, even as I had noticed the resemblance on the stone inscriptions; and it was not many minutes before I discovered that some of the words, although not to be recognized when pronounced, were written in a style closely similar to the Greek, and were obviously built upon Greek roots. This was not true of all the words, but it was true of such a large percentage, that I had hopes of soon being able to speak the language and so to solve the mystery of this fantastic deep-sea people.

After about two hours, my instructor rose from his seat, shoved the pad of paper back into his pocket, and indicated that our lessons were over for the day. But he smiled upon me graciously, as though to indicate that I was a not unpromising pupil; and he spoke a word which I thought I recognized as "Tomorrow," after which he saluted me with a courteous wave of the hand, and joining Rawson's instructor, went ambling leisurely out of view.

It was with a wry smile that Rawson rejoined me. "Say, did you get anything out of it at all?" he inquired. "I just couldn't make head or tail of it. Heavens, at this rate it would take me ten years to learn my A, B, C's!"

I did not concede that I had private reasons for feeling more optimistic than my friend. But, after I had offered to help and been repelled, I was content to let the conversation drift to other subjects.

Rawson was now annoyingly given to useless lamentations. Hotly he deplored our plight; he declared that he no longer saw anything romantic about it, and least of all perceived anything romantic about

being made to go to school again; and he reminded me time after time of Captain Gavison and the crew, whom we had last seen stranded in the wilderness with the disabled X-111, and who were no doubt awaiting our return in hope that was fast giving way to despair. Though I did not share in Rawson's dislike of our present quarters, and though I was deterred from leaving not only by hopes of learning the language but by thoughts of the nameless fair one, yet I had to listen when Rawson spoke of our duty to our waiting comrades; and, in spite of the forbidding precedent set by Stranahan and Ripley, I could not but consent to try to return to our shipmates.

As the doors of our dwelling were wide open and there was no one to interfere with us, we sauntered forthwith into the streets. As usual, we found them almost deserted, and so had no hesitation in proceeding along the winding walks and broad avenues and past the innumerable terraces, courts and temples in the direction from which we had entered the city. As the various distinctive gardens and palaces constituted unmistakable landmarks, we were seldom at a loss as to our route, and in little more than half an hour we found ourselves at the threshold of the town, before that odd statue-like edifice where we had been imprisoned. The path of escape now seemed open, and our flight appeared so easy that we paused momentarily, almost with misgivings at having encountered no obstacles. But not a person was in sight, and no sign of any impediment was visible, and so in surprise we started up that slope which led to the colonnades and outlying temples.

We had almost reached the top, and I was already deep in regrets at leaving this charming city just as it was becoming so interesting, when half a score of pale-gowned individuals suddenly appeared from above the ridge, their vociferous cries and commanding gestures warning us back. They carried no weapon, yet they could not have been more imperious had they borne loaded rifles; there seemed almost to be some hidden compulsion, some irresistible magnetism about them, so that our weak wills quailed and bowed to theirs, and we retreated before them as impulsively as a singed animal retreats before fire. I do not know why it was, for they surely would not have set violent hands upon us; but we no more thought of disobeying them than a trained dog thinks of disobeying its master. Back to the city we hastened, while they followed on our heels with faces stern and set; and, having re-entered the town, we made our way directly to the building we had just left, as though some superior mind controlled our movements and we were no longer free.

Upon our return, we met with another surprise. Naturally, we were prompted to seek Stranahan and our three other shipmates again; but we had expected that they would be occupied, as before, by cards or some other time-killing game. Instead, we found them seated in the four corners of the room, each with a companion, (needless to say, a native); and from the peculiar gestures of those companions and their habit of writing occasionally on pads of paper, we recognized that they were giving instructions in the language of the land. But this in itself was not the surprising fact. Two of the four newcomers were ladies, one of them being of matronly years; but the other, who sat opposite Stranahan, smilingly making notes with her pen, was not only in the full bloom of youth, but had that singularly sweet cast of countenance, those singularly clear and magnetic large blue eyes. These, I thought, could belong to only one woman in the world!

CHAPTER X

Discoveries

GREAT as was my joy upon observing that the entrancing mysterious lady was Stranahan's tutor, it was to be some time before her daily proximity had any effect upon my life. And meanwhile I was resigning myself to a regular routine, a routine only partly of my own choosing, and largely prescribed by those whom I had come to consider my masters. Each night (and by night I mean the period of eight or ten hours when the golden orbs were quenched and the city was in total blackness) I would sleep with Rawson and Stranahan in screened open-air rooms on the roof. And each day I would live almost as though by formula. Aroused by the burst of light that marked the queer underworld dawn, I would take a plunge in a salt-water swimming pool in a court of our apartment. A few minutes later I would join my companions in a repast of some fragile little native cakes and of some queer fruit like a cross between the apricot and peach, which were brought to us regularly by well-laden carriers whom I observed likewise supplying neighboring houses. Breakfast over, we were free for a while; and then I would usually go rambling about the city with Rawson or Stranahan, or sometimes with all my five former shipmates; and we would have a merry time laughing and chatting, inspecting the various palaces, colonnades and gardens, and poking fun at any object that happened to strike us as curious or absurd.

After an hour or two we would return to our apartments, to await the arrival of our tutors, who had a habit of appearing in a band of six (one for each of us) sometimes toward the end of the morning. Stranahan was still the most fortunate of us all, since for many weeks his tutor continued to be that woman of the Madonna features and magnetic large blue eyes; but the rest of us were also fortunate in a way, for she would always beam upon us with a bright "Good morning" in the native tongue; and I personally had hopes that the time was not far-off when we should be better acquainted.

At the end of perhaps two hours, the tutors would leave for the day; but they would always provide us with ample work in the shape of simple exercises to be written or of passages to be deciphered in textbooks of the kind evidently used for six-year-olds. This "home-work" (as Rawson designated it) would keep us busy until late in the afternoon, when a native would arrive with a tray containing various savory viands: a gray bread made from a grain with a flavor like walnuts; a succulent vegetable like French toast well browned; a spiced, starchy food reminding me vaguely of baked potatoes; cakes of a hundred varieties, and fruits shaped like tomatoes and tasting like muscat grapes, or elongated like cucumbers and tart as oranges, or round and large as cantaloupes and substantial as bananas. But while we were of course delighted at the abundance of these appetizing unfamiliar foods, we were not a little surprised—and not a little disappointed—at the absence of much that we would once have considered essential; and we constantly wondered why it was that no meat nor fish nor any other animal product found its place on the bill of fare.

After this meal (the second and last for the day) we were once more free to do as we wished; and we would ordinarily spend the time until dark in strolling around the city, or in sitting about in a little circle exchanging anecdotes, or in propounding theories as

to where we were and how we had arrived, or in playing cards or any other little game that we could devise. Except for our tutors, we came into contact with none of the natives; we were too ignorant of the language to speak with the occasional few whom we passed on the streets; and as yet we knew virtually nothing of how they lived.

But we were much less concerned about the natives than about our comrades of the X-111. We were still restrained in the city by the mysterious, irresistible power of compulsion exercised by our hosts; and though the days were lengthening into weeks, no word of Captain Gavison and our absent shipmates had reached us. For all that we could say, they might have perished of starvation or fallen through a black hole in the ground—or, more plausibly, they might have been discovered by the natives, and led as captive to lodgings miles away. Should we see them soon, or at least have news of them? or should we never learn what had befallen them? There was no way to decide except to wait—and the process of waiting was distressingly slow.

BUT I was secretly determined to do everything possible to hasten events. Obviously, the first necessity was to understand the native language—hence I put forth every effort to learn to read and write. Less because of my natural linguistic tendencies than because of my acquaintance with ancient Greek, I was making more rapid progress than any of my fellows, and was acquiring the rudiments of a speaking and reading knowledge. Not only did my own ears tell me so, but my instructor admitted as much by his occasional nods of approval, and now and then even by a "Very good" or "Excellent" when I was speaking or reciting to him. But not content with my normal rate of advance, I was fortifying myself with much secret practice. Often I would refrain from joining my comrades in their morning and evening strolls and pastimes, and would remain quietly in my room with a pad of paper and a pencil supplied me by my tutor. I would devote hours to writing in the native alphabet, until I could employ it with facility and assurance; or I would jot down a list of words and phrases and repeat them aloud time after time, trying to imitate the peculiar accentuation of my instructor. The latter task in particular was difficult and even painful, and subjected me more than once to ridicule, when Stranahan or the others entered the room unexpectedly and found me apparently talking to myself. But I persisted in spite of discouragements, and had hopes that, instead of commanding but a few scattered words and phrases, I would shortly be able to conduct an extended conversation.

It was only natural, however, that I should be able to read the language before I could speak it. Not more than two or three weeks had passed before I felt capable of deciphering any average native document. But, unfortunately, I had little opportunity to practice my talents, for the only written material I saw was in the shape of the simple exercise books lent me by my instructor. These, while admirably adapted for clarifying grammatical problems, were entirely devoid of vital information; and when I asked my instructor for more edifying works, I did not seem able to make him understand, for what he brought me was merely a more advanced exercise book.

Consequently, I had every reason to be grateful for that chance which put me in possession of several volumes designed for adult readers. For lack of better occupation, Rawson and I were minutely inspecting our apartments one afternoon, scrutinizing in partic-

ular the picturesque patterns of the veined marble walls, when suddenly I stopped short with a cry of surprise, startled at sight of a little rectangle faintly although unmistakably engraved in the otherwise unbroken surface of the marble.

Promptly I informed Rawson of my discovery. He shared in my surprise, and excitedly suggested that this was some mysterious trap-door.

Although I saw no reason to agree with him, I approached the rectangular patch to examine it more closely, and in so doing rested my hand appraisingly on the marble surface.

To my utter amazement, a portion of the wall gave way, swinging inward as if on noiseless hinges!

But if Rawson had had visions of secret corridors and darkened chambers, he was to be disappointed. The displaced rectangle revealed not a mysterious passageway, but a little closet or vault possible three feet deep—a vault filled to the brim with treasure! At least, it was filled with what I regarded as treasure, for within it were piled scores of books!

Hastily I reached for the nearest volume—a heavy tome bound in what I took to be a sort of artificial leather. The title filled me with rejoicing: it was a "Lexicon of the More Commonly Used Words."

Aided by the bewildered Rawson, I at once examined the entire collection. Although he could decipher not a word, Rawson feigned the profoundest interest; and, indeed, he may well have been interested, for, as I read and translated the titles, I was making discovery after extraordinary discovery. Not that any of the books were those works of sheer information which I most desired, but that they all embodied significant hints and clues. Some, like the inscriptions I had observed among the colonnades, seemed to refer to some great disaster, as in the case of one entitled, "Artistic Progress Since the Destruction"; another, which was called "Speculations Concerning the Supermarine World," fortified my impression of being in some inexplicably buried land; while several were treatises on such difficult subjects as "Intra-Atomic Engineering," "Marine Valves and Their construction," and "The Creation of Artificial Sunlight."

But the book that caused me the greatest surprise—a book that struck me as at once a priceless find and an insoluble mystery—was the well-thumbed yellowing little volume at the very bottom of the heap. Even to-day, when all that passed in those enigmatic realms is an old and oft-repeated story, I have difficulty in repressing my astonishment at that discovery. Imagine the bewilderment of one who, having voyaged to another world, suddenly receives news of familiar things, and at the same time learns unsuspected facts about the familiar! Imagine this, and you will have only a vague notion of the amazement I felt when, turning the pages of the book in that unknown cavernland, I recognized the name of—Homer!

And not only did I recognize the name of Homer, but I found it affixed to a work not previously catalogued among the productions of the great Attic bard! "Telegonus" was the title—and instantly I recalled that there had been a legend among post-Homeric writers of one Telegonus, the son of Odysseus and Circe, who had been sent by his enchantress mother in search of his father, and had slain his sire without realizing his identity.

One may be sure that I wasted no time about plunging into the book. One may be sure that I took no heed of the surprised exclamations of Rawson, nor even paused for more than a word of explanation, but read and read as fast as my knowledge of the language would permit. Truly, the poem was Homeric

in quality!—I recognized at once the swing of the inimitable hexameter, handled with masterly craftsmanship; and the opening passages, executed with epic dash and sweep, simplicity and power, convinced me that here was a work worthy of standing side by side with "The Iliad" and "The Odyssey."

But how came the poem to be here in this weird undersea realm? How came these submerged people to possess an Homeric work unknown to the modern world? These were the questions that perplexed me as I excitedly followed stanza after noble stanza; and ponder the problem as I might, debate it as I would with myself or the eager Rawson, I could conceive of no explanation, but was as mystified as if I had traveled to Mars and found the people addressing me in English or presenting me with copies of Shakespeare.

CHAPTER XI

Questions and Answers

THE chief effect of the discovery of the books was to make me doubly anxious to speak the native tongue. Not one of the score of volumes cast any light on the problems that bewildered me, and least of all on the mystery of Homer's "Telegonus"; and it was apparent that I should remain in ignorance until I could converse with the natives. Accordingly, I had need of that rarest of all qualities, a virtue in which I am almost wholly lacking—patience. Stifling my eagerness and curiosity as best I could, I had to plod away for days and days in acquiring new native words and phrases and in practicing speaking in the solitude of my own rooms. The task was far from pleasant, and the suspense and the waiting were harrowing; but I was like a traveler following a trail through an unfamiliar jungle; and, feverish as I was to escape, I had no choice except to persist on the one visible course.

But had I not been so eager to batter down the mystery, I would have found abundant cause for encouragement. I was still progressing, progressing rapidly, attaining a speaking knowledge of the language with a speed possible only for one long trained as a linguist. And, as the result of many a secret conversation, which I held with myself by way of practice, I advanced swiftly to the point of being able to exchange ideas with the natives. At least, I felt that I had advanced to that point, and awaited only opportunity to test my new-won powers.

The obvious course would have been to address myself to my tutor, and several times I was on the point of doing so, but on each occasion he seemed so absorbed in the day's exercises, that I decided to postpone the experiment. In the end, however, I should no doubt have opened my mind to him—had not chance intervened and sent me a more charming informant.

I had of course not forgotten that entrancing Madonna-like woman who was Stranahan's tutor. Indeed, I could not easily have forgotten her, for her exquisite features and bright eyes kept flashing before me at all hours of the day and night; and already I felt myself as completely subject to her spell as Dante to the spell of a Beatrice. Under the witchery of her influence, Alma Huntley was becoming no more than the figment of a remote and misty past—and yet I was not even acquainted with the fair unknown, I had never exchanged more than a formal greeting with her. I scarcely knew how to sow the seeds even for a casual friendship. What was she like at heart and how would she react to my advances?

But the time was to come when she would be more to me than one to be admired at a distance. She was, in fact, to serve in a double role: for not only was she to fascinate me with her companionship, but she was to cast light upon those problems which were tantalizing me.

Although I caught glimpses of her almost every morning when she came as Stranahan's instructor, yet I would have had little chance to speak with her even had I chosen, since (as I have already related) she ordinarily arrived and left in the company of the other tutors. But one day—perhaps because she had some particularly difficult bit of grammar to explain—she lingered over her work much longer than usual, and was so absorbed in it that she did not appear to notice that her fellow teachers had left. At the moment I did not perceive that this was my opportunity; but good fortune was to be with me, and when she emerged from the marble doors of our home, I happened to be strolling along the colonnade not a hundred yards away.

At first it was almost a shock to me to see her come unaccompanied toward me—a shock in which intense pleasure was mingled with something akin to dread. For a moment I had an impulse to hide behind one of the great stone columns; but, fortunately, I thrust this foolish desire from me, and, after a few seconds, had almost regained my composure.

As she approached, I could scarcely take my gaze from her. Upon her face was a serene, placid expression, such as she almost always wore; but the shadow of a smile flickered about her lips, and her great blue eyes were withdrawn as if they saw not the world wherein she walked but only some calm and perfect inner vision.

Slowly I advanced, and diffidently placed myself in her path. At first she did not seem to see me, but in an instant, almost as though she had been expecting some one, her gaze was lifted to meet mine; and no surprise was marked there, nor any trace of annoyance, only an unlooked-for pleasure. In low, musical tones, and with a grace that to me seemed goddess-like, she murmured "Good morning," while such a lovely and unmatched light shone in her eyes and such transfiguring inner radiance illumined her features, that I felt that I had encountered an immortal.

"Good morning," I replied, in the native dialect, and at the cost of greater effort than I would have cared to admit; and I shuddered inwardly lest I give her cause for laughter.

She smiled charmingly, and was about to pass on, when in desperation I strove to detain her. "I beg your pardon," said I, stiffly, speaking almost by rote in phrases I had memorized days before. "I beg your pardon, but have you a minute to spare? There are one or two questions I should like very much to ask you."

FOR an instant she stared at me in surprise. But a smile played about the corners of her mouth, and apparently she was not offended. "Why, of course, you may ask any question you want," she replied, more puzzled than annoyed. And, pointing down the colonnade to a circular marble bench enclosed by a ring of slender columns, she continued, "Let us go over there. Then we can talk, if you wish."

In silence we traversed the intervening two or three hundred yards. My heart was so full that I could not have spoken had I desired; I could scarcely credit my double good fortune in having won this lady's good will and in speaking well enough to be understood by her.

And when at length I found myself seated at her side, her vivid blue eyes looking inquiringly and yet kindly into my own, I felt as one who enters the land of dreams come true. It was with difficulty that I answered when, in low, sweet tones, she asked me what it was that I desired to know; and when the first words came to me, they were forced out only by an effort of the ill, for I should much have preferred to sit there in silence, staring and staring at her animated lovely face, her sharp-cut classic profile and symmetrically modelled features.

But, unfortunately, the laws of human intercourse demanded that I do more than gaze at her in speechless rapture. And I answered her question, therefore, with one or two commonplace remarks which expressed nothing of the exaltation within me, and which could have conveyed no high opinion of my intelligence. "I am a stranger in this land," said I, picking my words with a translator's care, "and so find many things here which perplex me. I was wondering whether you would not be good enough to help me. Am I imposing too much upon your kindness?"

"Oh, no, of course not," she murmured; and as she spoke I noted that her upper lip trembled slightly, as though from extreme sensitiveness and sympathy. "Do you not know that it would be a pleasure to be of aid?"

I was enchanted by this reply, for there could be no doubting the utter candor and sincerity in her earnest blue eyes, which were glowing with a softness equal to the magnetism they sometimes displayed.

Encouraged to the point of boldness, I decided upon a daring step. "Before I ask any other question," I ventured, "might it not be well for us to know each other's names?"

"Why, of course," she agreed. "My name is Aelios." "Aelios!" I repeated, charmed by the sound. "What a delightful name! And what is your other name, may I ask?"

"My other name?" she echoed, astonished. "What other name do you mean?"

I saw that somehow I had made a mistake. "Why, haven't you another name?" I inquired, with distinct loss of confidence.

"Another name?" She tittered delightedly, as though enjoying a rare joke. "Well, if that isn't the most outlandish idea! What do you think I'd do with another name?"

"Why, that—that's not for me to say," I stammered. "Only, where I come from, every one has at least two or three names."

"Oh, how perfectly ridiculous!" she exclaimed. "Just as if we haven't enough to remember one name apiece!"

She paused momentarily, and I was too much embarrassed to resume the conversation. Fortunately, she continued without my aid. "How many names have you?" she inquired; and the playful light in her eyes told me that she could not have been more amused if asking how many hands or feet I had.

"Only two," I admitted, glad that I had not to confess to three or four. "I am called Anson Harkness."

"Anson Harkness," she repeated, slowly, as if savoring the peculiar sound. "Why, if that isn't the strangest name I ever heard!"

"Where I come from it isn't considered strange," I assured her. "Of course, in my country everything is very different—"

"Yes, I know," she interposed. "You come from above the sea."

"How do you know?" I cried, astonished.

Again she peered at me in surprise, and almost, I

thought, with something of that puzzled air with which one regards a child who persists in asking the ridiculous. "Why, of course you must come from above the sea," she explained. "Where else is there to come from?"

"And do the people here all know we come from above the sea?"

"Yes, indeed," declared Aelios, a naive seriousness replacing the frolicsome air of the moment before. "That's what we've all been worrying about. We thought we were proof against invasions from above, and we simply can't understand how you got here. Why, for three thousand years the upper world doesn't seem even to have suspected our existence."

"Three thousand years?" I burst forth. "Three thousand years? Then, for God's sake, how old is this land of yours? And, in heaven's name, what country is this, anyway?"

"Why, I thought you knew," murmured Aelios, with a look of surprise. "This is Atlantis, of course."

"Atlantis!" I ejaculated, in overpowering amazement. "Atlantis!" And confused visions of a lost continent swarmed through my mind, and I wondered whether this could be the sunken world described by Plato.

But before I could utter another word, my attention was diverted by an unpardonable intrusion. "Great shades of Alexander, having a nice little tête-à-tête, are you?" came a familiar voice from the rear; and Stranahan, stalking up uninvited, deposited himself on a seat just to the left of Aelios, and grinningly requested us not to heed him, but to go right on with our little talk.

CHAPTER XII

The Submergence

THE arrival of Stranahan, of course, had its effect.

Not only did he interrupt my conversation with Aelios at a crucial point, but he made it impossible for the discussion to take a personal turn. I realized, to be sure, that he was actuated by motives of good fellowship, but I felt that he exhibited remarkably poor sense; and I am afraid that I displayed not a little of my displeasure in the forced welcome that I frowned upon the intruder. But Stranahan appeared to be afflicted with no foolish sensitiveness; and, having decided to join us, he seemed not to notice the frozen reception I accorded him.

Like one determined to see things through to the end, he remained resolutely with us. He seemed scarcely discouraged by his limited knowledge of the language, which made him a total stranger to most of what we were saying; and for a good part of our conversation, he sat by in gaping ignorance, venturing an occasional remark with such poor display of grammar and pronunciation that I could only smile.

Yet our discussion was so engrossing that for minutes at a time I quite forgot the existence of Stranahan. Even the bright sparkling eyes of Aelios had for the moment no more than an impersonal interest for me, for I found myself making a discovery so strange, so amazing and so utterly unprecedented as to upset my conception of human history.

"Can this really be Atlantis?" I heard myself inquiring, once the disturbance created by Stranahan's arrival had subsided. "Can this really be the famous lost Atlantis?"

"The lost Atlantis?" repeated Aelios, looking perplexed. "I didn't know there was any lost Atlantis."

I explained as briefly as possible the legend of the ancient continent that was said to have sunk beneath the sea. "If there's any truth in the story, that was one of the greatest disasters in history," I remarked, trying to lend importance to what I felt to be but the flimsiest of myths.

"Disaster!" echoed Aelios, her perplexity deepening. "Disaster! This is the first time I ever heard any one call the submergence a disaster!"

"Do you mean, then, that there actually was a submergence?" I demanded. "That a whole continent sank beneath the waves?"

"Why, of course!" she exclaimed, astonished at so self-evident a question. "How else do you think we got here beneath the sea?" And she pointed significantly to the great greenish roof and the bright, golden orbs above us, while into her eyes came a wonderfully sweet, indulgent light, as into the eyes of one who delights to teach children the obvious.

"Where did you suppose we could be now," she continued, "except in Archeon, the capital of Atlantis?"

It was at this point that Stranahan thought it time to let himself be heard. He drew his lips far apart as if to speak, uttered an inarticulate syllable or two, and then stopped abruptly short, as though unable to frame the desired words.

"What is it, my friend?" asked Aelios, turning to Stranahan with a gracious smile. But since Stranahan could only gape idiotically in reply, I thought it my duty to answer for him.

"What I cannot understand," I said, returning to the question that had been puzzling me most of all, "is that you say there was a submergence, and yet seem to think it was not a disaster. Surely, if the whole continent of Atlantis was lost—"

"What makes you think the whole continent was lost?" demanded Aelios, a quizzical, almost amused light in her great blue eyes. "Why, the better part of Atlantis is safe here beneath the sea!"

"Safe here beneath the sea?" I cried, in growing confusion. "Why, how is that possible?"

"That is a long story," she started to explain. "It goes back very far, thousands of years, in fact—"

"And cannot you tell me that story?" I proposed, eagerly. "Cannot you tell from the beginning? Remember, I am a stranger here and find everything very confusing. What is this Atlantis of yours? And how old is it? And how large? And how did it come to be submerged? And how does it happen that you are living here now beneath the ocean?"

"Whole volumes have been written in answer to those questions," declared Aelios, with a winning smile. "But I'll try to explain everything as best I can." And she paused momentarily, while Stranahan craned his long neck far forward, as if to take in all that she had to say.

"It is perhaps the most romantic tale in history," she resumed, speaking almost with exaltation, while her eyes took on a far-away dreamy look that I thought most becoming, and her upper lip twitched with the same sympathetic quivering I had noted before. "Atlantis is one of the most ancient republics in the world, and at one time was the most populous and powerful of all countries. Our history goes back more than seven thousand years, four thousand above the sea and three thousand beneath—four thousand years of growth, tumult and conquest, and three thousand years of maturity and peace. At a time when Egypt and Babylonia were still unheard of, our engineers reared monuments more massive than the pyramids; and when Babylonia and Egypt were in the full pride of their renown our people regarded them con-

temptuously as the merest barbarian tribes. Our accomplishments were to them what theirs were to the unclothed blacks of the south; and our country surpassed theirs as a marble palace surpasses a clay hut."

"BUT what was the precise location of your country? And how large was it?" I interposed.

"It was in an isolated position a full day's sailing west of the Pillars of Hercules. As for its size, it was large, and yet not overwhelmingly so; a swift runner might have traveled around it between full moon and full moon. But today you might look vainly for its plains and snow-tipped mountains, for above all but its highest peaks, the unbroken waters foam and toss."

Aelios paused momentarily, and a melancholy remnant light came into her eyes, while her long, lithe fingers toyed absently with the folds of her lavender gown.

"Ah, how sad!" I could not forbear murmuring.

"What a ghastly tragedy!"

"No, not a tragedy," she quickly denied, regarding me again with a peculiar surprise that I could not understand. "There is no tragedy in the history of Atlantis, though of course there might have been."

"No tragedy?" I cried, wondering vaguely if Aelios could be trying to make sport of me. "Is it not tragedy for a whole great country to be submerged?"

"It may be, or again it may not be," she replied, enigmatically. "In this case, it was not."

Noting my quizzical silence, she continued with a reassuring smile, "No doubt you will find this difficult to understand. In your world above seas, conditions are perhaps very different from those of old Atlantis. Certainly, you are spared the perils which we faced, and which compelled us to submerge our continent."

"Compelled you to submerge your continent?" I repeated, growing more amazed each instant. "Do you mean to say you submerged it deliberately?"

"Yes. How else?" she returned, in matter-of-fact tones. "The Submergence—or the Deliverance, as it is sometimes called—was the most fortunate event in our history. We celebrate it annually at our great festival, the Festival of the Good Destruction."

Again she paused, as if uncertain how to proceed, while I was forced to join Stranahan in a bewildered silence.

"In order to make things clear," she continued at length, with upper lip still fluttering and eyes that smiled with kindly good will, "I suppose I will have to describe Atlantis as it was in the old days, the days before the flood. Thirty-one hundred years ago, or at the time when the Submergence was first proposed, we were in possession of secrets which the upper world has perhaps not rediscovered even today. I will not speak of our art, literature and philosophy, which, though advanced for their day, were incomparably inferior to what we have since produced; it was in scientific spheres that our progress was most pronounced. From the beginning, our science was a strangely lopsided growth; it was most developed on the purely material side; and while it could tell us how to compute a comet's weight and enabled us to communicate with the people of Mars, still on the whole it was concerned with such practical questions as how to produce food artificially or how to utilize new sources of energy. And in these directions it was amazingly efficient. We had long passed the stage, for example, when we needed to rely upon steam, gasoline or electricity to run our motors or to carry us over the ground or through the air; we had mastered the life-secret of matter itself, and by means of the

energy within the atoms could produce power equal to that of a tornado or of a volcanic eruption."

"Marvelous!" I exclaimed, enthusiastically. "Marvelous! What magnificent opportunities that gave you!"

"Yes, that was just the trouble," pursued Aelios, the trace of a frown darkening her lovely cheeks and eyes. "There are some opportunities that no men should have. What would be the gain in giving a wasp the power of a bull? It was not a mere coincidence, for example, that the decline of art was simultaneous with the rise of science. After thousands of years in which the pursuit of the beautiful had been one of the objects of life, men began to be bewildered by the idea of their conquest over matter; they came to apply themselves to the construction of huge and intricate machines, of towering but unsightly piles of masonry, of swift means of locomotion and of unique and elaborate systems of amusement. And at the same time they devoted themselves extensively to destruction. Not to the destruction of their own monstrous contrivances, alas! but to the undermining of human happiness and human life. In our isolated position, we had had comparatively little intercourse for centuries with other lands; but now that we possessed lightning means of travel and lightning weapons of aggression, our citizens began to swoop down occasionally upon a foreign coast, picking a quarrel with the people and finding some excuse for smiting thousands dead. At first, of course, our enemies had no means of retaliation, but it was certain that in the end they would have imitated our methods and singed us with our own fire."

"And is that what actually happened?" I asked, fancying I saw a trace of light at last. "Is that why you had to submerge your land?"

"No, that is not what happened," said Aelios, smiling at my naivete, while a half-suppressed yawn from Stranahan gave her but little encouragement to continue. "Not all our people were savages, and not all approved of our policy of international murder; nor were all content to see art and beauty trodden down by the twin hoofs of mechanism and multiple production. Of course, the protestants were at first mere voices walling against the waves, and more than one was jeered as a maniac; but the protest continued and grew through many decades; and though there were thousands that continued to appraise the cities by their size and scientific accomplishment by its deadliness, the time came when the party of rebellion was almost as numerous as the conservatives or 'Respectables,' and when the limitation of mechanical power became an issue that threatened the very life of the State."

"I will not trouble you with the details of that struggle, or with the powerful cause made out by the enemies of Super-Science—for of this you shall hear more later. For the present it is sufficient to state that the climax arrived in the year 56 B. S.—"

"What does B. S. mean?" I interrupted.

"Before the Submergence, of course!" explained Aelios, with a slight frown that instantly made way for a broad and glowing smile.

"It was in the year 56," she proceeded, "that the Agripides ministry came into office. Following the open insurrection of beauty-lovers against the 'Respectables,' the Anti-Mechanism party triumphed in a general election; and Agripides, known by his friends as 'Savior of the World' and by his foes as the 'City-Wrecker,' began to carry out the revolutionary policies he had been advocating for years."

"These policies, which were perhaps the most dar-

ing ever conceived by the human mind, contemplated nothing less than the overthrow of existing civilization and the substitution of something better suited to endure. It was Agripides' contention—and a contention established by the researches of the very scientists he opposed—that the State of Atlantis, under current conditions, had a potential life of not more than five hundred years; that it was burning away its energies with profligate abandon, and would soon droop withering and exhausted into permanent decay. Its best human material was being used up and cast aside like so much straw; its best social energies were being diverted into wasteful and even poisonous channels; its too-rapid scientific progress was imposing a wrenching strain upon the civilized mind and institutions. There was only one remedy, other than the natural one of oblivion and death; and that remedy was in a complete metamorphosis, a change such as the caterpillar undergoes when it enters the chrysalis, a transformation into an environment of such repose that society might have time to recover from its overgrowth and to evolve along quiet and peaceful lines."

ANOTHER half-unconscious yawn from Stranahan imposed a brief interruption at this point; but Aelios had now thoroughly warmed to her theme; and, disregarding Stranahan's rudeness, she continued almost without delay.

"The proposal which Agripides had to make, and which he had been advocating eloquently for years, was one that caused even the liberal-minded to gasp and shake their heads doubtfully. He declared, in a word, that Atlantis was not sufficiently isolated and enisled; that it would never be safe while exposed to the tides of commerce and worldly affairs; that the only rational course was for it first to destroy whatever was noxious within itself, and then to prevent further contamination by walling itself off completely from the rest of the planet. And since no sea however wide and no fortress however strong would be efficacious in warding off the hordes of mankind, the one possible plan would be to go where no men could follow; to seal Atlantis up hermetically in an airtight case—in other words, to sink the whole island to the bottom of the sea!"

"Good Lord!" I exclaimed, horrified at so strange a suggestion. "Sounds just like a lunatic's ravings!"

"No, quite the opposite," replied Aelios, with an indulgent smile. "I see you don't understand at all. Agripides was not a lunatic; he was the greatest man than ever lived."

"I thought he must be either a madman or a genius," I returned, dryly.

"Look, I'll show you!" she flung out, almost as a challenge, since I did not seem convinced of her hero's greatness. And rising hurriedly and fitting a dozen paces down the colonnade, she pointed to a life-sized marble bust on a panel between the columns. "See! That is Agripides! Does that look like the face of a lunatic?"

Hastily I had followed Aelios, with Stranahan at my heels; and he joined me in surveying the bust with a show of interest, though his puzzled expression showed that he did not know and much less cared who Agripides may have been. "The glorious saints have mercy on us, if he hasn't a beard like a goat!" was his one and only comment. But I did not deign to reply, and fixed my eyes sternly and appraisingly upon the countenance of Agripides. The hair and beard were perhaps a little long, I thought, unconsciously agreeing with Stranahan; but the features were the most striking I had ever seen in any human

being. Like many of the faces which have come down to us from classical times, this countenance combined intellect and beauty to a singular degree. The brow was broad, as in the representations of Homer, but it also rose to a majestic dominance; the eyes were large and alert, the lips thin and compressed, the cheeks long and firmly modelled, while the features were furrowed with deep lines of sympathy that reminded me of Lincoln, and at the same time were marked with a wistful, dreamy expression that contrasted strangely with a savage, almost tigerish determination more implied than clearly graven on the even contours of the face.

"Agripides was a remarkable orator, and at the same time a writer of force," stated Aelios, as we returned to our seats. "Hundreds of his essays and addresses have been preserved, and they show such brilliance, vehemence, and wit, and at the same time such clarity and logic of presentation, that it is little wonder that he converted all Atlantis to his way of thinking. Or perhaps it would not be fair to say that he converted all Atlantis—there was plenty of wordy opposition to his schemes, as well as several little armed revolts and insurrections that had to be suppressed. But Agripides was not a man to be easily daunted, and in spite of the strenuous objections of the 'Respectables,' the year 49 saw the publication of his complete plans for the Submergence.

"Those plans were more daring than the worst enemies of Agripides could have anticipated. He proposed, in a word, to cover a large part of Atlantis with an enormous glass wall, reaching like an artificial sky hundreds of feet above ground, and thick enough to withstand the pressure of unthinkable tons of water. Near the base of this wall should be two great valves, one through which the ocean might be admitted into a broad canal or artificial river, and a second (at the opposite end of Atlantis) through which the waters might be forced out again by means of gigantic intra-atomic pumps. I need not mention, of course, that deep wells and distilled sea water would serve for domestic and drinking purposes; that decomposed water would provide sufficient oxygen for breathing; and that artificial sunlight, synthesized chemically so as to produce the life-giving elements of the original, would not only supply illumination but would support vegetation and human life as well."

"Yes, yes, that is all very good," said I, feeling that Aelios had not yet touched upon the most essential fact of all. "But how did Agripides propose to sink the island beneath the sea?"

"That is a difficult question," she murmured, with a smile that was worth more to me than volumes of knowledge. "It involves technical questions of engineering with which, I must confess, I am very poorly acquainted. But, as I understand it, what Agripides proposed was that enormous tanks be buried under the sea bottom far to the west of Atlantis, and, at a given signal, the water should be raised to boiling point by an application of intra-atomic heat. The resulting tons of steam, in their fury to escape, would create an explosion that would burst the very floor of the sea; in one direction there would be a gigantic upheaval, and a lifting of the ocean bed; and in another direction, by way of reaction, there would be a sinking of the ocean bottom in an effort of the strata not directly affected, to fill in the gap left by those displaced. And while a whole vast area would rise thousands of feet (although not to the level of the water), another area would be forced downward an equal distance; and that area, which would be of enormous extent, would include the island of Atlantis.

To use a crude illustration, one may think of a common plank, balanced on its center, of which one end cannot be tilted upward without causing the other end to slant down; and one may imagine Atlantis as reposing on the lower slope of such a plank."

"BUT that is all mere theory," I pointed out. "Certainly, Agripides wouldn't dare to sink the island merely on the basis of such unproved calculations."

"Oh, no, of course not. The computations were all verified by actual experiment. With the aid of two accomplished engineers, Agripides made a small model of the continent and the surrounding ocean, accurately reproducing every detail; and, having stimulated an explosion under the proper conditions, he found that the miniature island sank precisely as he expected the real island to do."

"Even so," I argued, "would not the explosion have shattered the entire crust of the earth? And would not the great glass dome have been split and ruined even if the ground beneath it remained firm?"

"All that was duly provided for," explained Aelios. "The submergence was to be so gradual as to require several hours; and since the explosion was to occur under the sea rather than under the island itself, it would shatter the crust of the earth only in remote localities, and the shock would not be severe enough to affect the glass wall. In other words—to make another comparison—the island was to be like a ship that sinks in its entirety after striking the reefs, although only the prow is damaged and the rest remains uninjured."

"Yes, I understand perfectly," said I, recalling my recent experiences in the X-111. "But even assuming that the experiment was perfectly safe, how did Agripides ever persuade the people to sink their homes beneath the sea?"

"It was precisely there that he proved his greatness," said Aelios, casting an admiring glance in the direction of Agripides' statue. "Well knowing that imagination is the most powerful force in human life, he began to work upon the imagination of the masses to show the dangers of civilization. Simultaneously with the publication of his plans for the Submergence, he opened to the public an enormous exhibition palace in which he presented the most ghastly display in history. With the vision of the social philosopher and the intuition of the prophet, he had constructed in miniature the Atlantis of the future as he conceived it would be—and no man could gaze upon that Atlantis without heartily praying for the Submergence. The landscape had been blasted, muddled and made black, and scarcely a green leaf could be seen; steel towers and smokestacks dotted the island until it looked like a range of artificial hills; great wheels and chains whirled and rattled in the dark interiors of the buildings, and to each wheel and chain a man was tied; and the huge engines and motors were fed with the blood of men, and watered with their tears. Innumerable multitudes—not only of men but of women, and of sickly, pinch-faced children—were bound as slaves to the machines, and responded to automatic orders that the machines flashed forth; and after they had served long and their limbs were growing frail, they were crushed and mangled by the very masters they had served, or else were cast out to perish like frost-bitten flies. But the great wheels never ceased to turn or the levers to clatter, and their steel jaws gnashed the gouged-out hearts and brains of men, and their dust and cinders clouded the fields and forests; their poison fumes invaded the lungs of the people and they die by millions."

"What a hideous picture!" I cried, with a shudder. "But certainly, certainly it was an exaggeration!"

"No, Agripides had no need to exaggerate. He merely showed the logical advance upon existing advances. But this was the least grewsome of the exhibits. One half of the display, which he entitled "The Triumph of Science," was devoted to the supreme horror. Here again he depicted artificial landscapes and many-towered cities; but the wheels of those cities were not revolving, though smoke was indeed in the air. At first sight, they might hardly have been recognized as cities at all; they were really little more than chaotic heaps of iron and stone; many of the buildings had been blasted to fragments, some had toppled over, others were mere mangled frameworks of steel. Scarcely more than an isolated wall remained standing here and there to show that this had been the home of men; but of the inhabitants themselves there was indeed an occasional sign: here one was furtively gasping for breath, writhing on the ground like a tormented worm; there one was groping crazily through the ruins, with torn breast and blinded eyes; yonder a family group was lying sprawled at all angles, with pale faces convulsed with their last agony.

"But had one looked for the source of the destruction, one would not easily have found it—except that far above, so remote as scarcely to be visible, a fleet of mosquito-like flying craft were buzzing on their way like stealthy marauders."

Aelios paused, a deep seriousness darkening her fair features; and as I sat there regarding her in silence, I could not but reflect what unspeakable distances separated the bloody picture she described from the enchanting scenes among which she dwelt.

"NATURALLY," she continued, "the people were not captivated with the thought of the future depicted by Agripides. And, Agripides, acting at the psychological moment when all Atlantis was most aroused, convened the National Assembly, and polled a majority of—three to one in favor of the Submergence! This majority being confirmed by a referendum of the people, the great leader took immediate steps toward carrying out his revolutionary project.

"Nearly forty-eight years were consumed in the necessary preliminaries, and in that time Atlantis found itself forced halfway toward the realization of Agripides' direst prophecies. The island of Antiles, a small republic located far to westward, had spied out the aggressive schemes of the Atlantean military experts, and enlarging upon them, had manufactured a fleet of poison-bearing aircraft capable of smiting whole cities with death and ruin. That they were aimed for a contemplated conflict with Atlantis there could be not a doubt; that such a conflict could not be averted by diplomacy was too self-evident to require demonstration; and that there was no resisting the destructive airships was generally, although unofficially, admitted. Conceivably, it was the dread of imminent disaster that restrained the minds of the people from vacillating at the last moment and that brought the plans of Agripides to their triumphant issue.

"Agripides, unfortunately, did not survive to see the consummation of his plans. Such a happiness was more than he had hoped for; the years were already heavy upon him when his revolutionary ideas first won approval. But, dying peacefully at an advanced age in the year 15 B. S., he yet lived long enough to supervise the more important details of the project and to be assured of its eventual success.

"In accordance with Agripides' directions, a rein-

forced glass wall many layers thick was erected over the most picturesque part of Atlantis, for it was agreed that the rest (which included the site of many cities) was not worth saving. I shall not describe the steps taken to insure the health and comfort of the people after the Submergence, to rear elegant palaces and mansions, to duplicate the sunlight and to produce food chemically; I shall not even dwell upon the Good Destruction, except to say that all save the most essential of power-driven tools were piled up in the doomed part of the island, to be buried on the day of the Submergence together with the towers of the deserted cities. But what I must mention—and this is most important—is that not all our people were content to be submerged; that about one-third, irreconcilable to the last, emigrated eastward in a great body a few months before the Submergence. It was this that made us most sad when Agripides' plans were fulfilled and we sank at last to the bottom of the sea."

"Have you ever heard what happened to them?" I inquired, marveling at this extraordinary migration.

"No, how could we? We have never since established communication with the earth. But I was thinking that perhaps you, who are from the upper world, could give us some tidings of our lost fellow men."

"I am not sure but that I can," I replied, slowly, thinking of the ancient Greeks and their striking resemblances to the Atlanteans and wondering whether the immigrants from the sunken island might not have been among the original settlers of Athens and Corinth.

And then, recalling the mystery of the "Telegonus," that powerful lost Homeric epic, I perceived a possible clue. "Tell me," I asked, though the question was apparently irrelevant, "what do you know about Homer?"

"Homer?" she echoed. And then, with the ease of perfect familiarity, "Why, Homer was one of the greatest poets we know of—almost equal to the best that have arisen since the Good Destruction. He lived at about the time of the Submergence in a country far to the East, with which we had trade relations in spite of its half barbarous condition. It was, in a way, a sort of dependency, a ward of Atlantis; and it was from us that its people derived their alphabet as well as much of their language and many of their institutions. Possibly it was there that the Atlantean migrants settled."

"Ah, I see," said I, with a flash of understanding. "Then you mean—"

But before I could utter another word, interruption came from an unexpected quarter. And with a jolt I returned from ancient Atlantis to the realities of my own life. "Hello, boys! Hello! Hello! There they are, there they are!" came in loud familiar tones from our rear, followed by a salvo of cheers; and before Stranahan and I could quite realize what was happening, we felt our hands grasped in a multitude of hands, and found ourselves surrounded by dozens, literally dozens, of well known faces. The first I recognized was that of Captain Gavison, who grinned happily in welcome; then I distinguished one after one the faces of my fellow seamen, apparently all of them, and all of them talking, laughing, crowding about, slapping us on the back, and shouting out greetings in a tumultuous chorus.

The rest of the men on the ship had arrived, and again the party was united. What troubles had been encountered and how they had managed to reach us was to be found out later. It was a very strange meeting for under some conditions friendship takes a new guise, a new value.

CHAPTER XIII

Trial and Judgment

TO our disappointment, we received no immediate explanation of the arrival of Captain Gavison and his men. A score of the natives, who stood frowning in the background, appeared disinclined to permit any extended conversation; and it was but a minute before they motioned the newcomers to follow them. I was interested to observe that all, from the Captain down to the humblest recruit, obeyed as readily as though in response to an absolute master, marching not in military formation and yet at a regular pace and with every appearance of discipline.

Having nothing better to do, Stranahan and I trailed in their wake, for at their first appearance Aellos had murmured a hasty "Good-bye" and had gone tripping out of sight around a bend in the colonnade.

In a few minutes we saw our comrades entering a building we well knew—the palace of sapphire and amber. Although expecting to be ordered out, we made bold to follow, and to our surprise passed through the gates of the building and into its gorgeous interior without attracting any noticeable attention. Arriving at the great central theatre, we observed that hundreds of the natives were assembled as though in solemn debate. Many an eye was turned upon the newcomers in curiosity and amazement; but there was no audible murmur at our entrance. And when Captain Gavison and his followers were motioned to seats, Stranahan and I had no hesitation about joining them.

But the unlucky Stranahan was doomed to still further boredom. For nearly an hour he was compelled to listen to a discussion of which he understood scarcely a word. Certainly, he had cause to envy me, for I easily followed the greater part of what was said—and most unusual and absorbing I found it!

The leader of the debate was a broad-browed woman, with a firm and distinguished manner, and more than a trace of beauty in spite of her graying hair. But she spoke comparatively little; and six or eight of the audience took turns in standing in the open space in front and delivering brief addresses. Their theme was not at first apparent to me; I thought that they were perhaps discussing some question of politics, or pleading the merits of some new law; and I was surprised to discover that what they were arguing was no mere practical matter, but concerned the architecture of a new building, to be known as the "Palace of the Ten Arts." One there was that suggested a lagoon fronting the edifice, a second who recommended rainbow fountains, and a third who favored an arcade of multi-colored crystal; and all the proposals were heard with equal respect and duly noted down by the leader of the debate, who smiled benignantly upon all the speakers and refrained from obtruding her personal preferences.

I was relieved when at length all who desired to speak had had their say. The leader now declared the meeting open for further business; and now it was that a tall young man, whom I recognized as one of the attendants of Captain Gavison and his men, rose quickly to his feet and advanced with a determined air toward the speaker's space. A hush of expectation had come over the gathering; all eyes were fastened upon the tall young man as though he had a message of rare importance.

His first words were to justify this impression. "Fellow citizens," said he, speaking in a deep-toned

voice which had something of that musical quality common to his people, "I have to bring to your attention to-day a matter unique in the history of Atlantis. First, however, let me recall to your minds several facts with which you are no doubt familiar. Two months ago we were astonished to find in our midst two creatures whose sallow complexion, grotesque costume and still more grotesque features, proclaimed them not to be natives of Atlantis. How they had penetrated beneath the secluded dome of our country we could not imagine, but it was decided that the best course would be to educate them in our language, and, after they were thoroughly conversant with the tongue, to question them in the attempt to solve the mystery. This decision was only reinforced by the appearance of two more of the queer creatures a day or so later, and then again by the arrival of a third strange couple. While it was feared that our age-old seclusion had been broken and that we were being invaded by the upper world, still it was decided that for the present the best course would be to maintain an unperturbed but vigilant silence."

The speaker paused, and cleared his throat as though the important part of his address were to follow. "Only yesterday, fellow citizens," he continued, "you heard the startling sequel. A field naturalist, roaming along the Salty River in the wilderness beyond the furthest colonnades, made the most surprising discovery of his life—a peculiar ugly, rod-like ship of unknown type, a ship that seemed to be fairly swarming with uncouth humans! Naturally, the scientist was alarmed; and, having made his escape, he hastened back to the city to secure aid in capturing the aliens. As he described them, they were in every respect like the barbarians of which ancient annals tell—great, brawny humans of unkempt and ferocious appearance. But we knew that they could be no more redoubtable than their kindred who were already among us; we knew that they would be easily subdued by the superior minds and irresistible magnetic wills with which nature and a select inheritance have endowed our race. And when the twenty men of the searching expedition set out early this morning, we had reason to believe that the aliens would be present by evening to face trial before this assemblage.

"As you observe, we have not been disappointed. But now, fellow citizens, the great problem arises. The prisoners appear to be unclean as well as wanton and unprincipled men. Contrary to all regulations, they have been catching fish from the Salty River and using them for food. They have been slaying unoffending crabs and turtles, and—disgusting though the idea be—frying and eating them! They have been polluting the water of the stream; they have been trampling down the rarest seaweeds, and beating to death the daintiest water-flowers; they have been scrawling all sorts of crude and outlandish designs on the delicate pink and blue of the roof-bearing columns.

"But all this—criminal though it be—we may overlook for the moment. The chief problem presented by the arrival of these aliens is of such wide-reaching social consequence that their minor transgressions pale into insignificance. For the first time in more than three thousand years, the principles of Agrippides have been violated. Visitors from outside have at last appeared; at last we are in danger of contamination by the passions and vices of the upper world. Whether the invasion was deliberate is not definitely known, but how it was made is sufficiently clear: the barbarian ship, which was equipped to travel under the sea, was sucked into the whirlpool at the ocean entrance of Atlantis and forced into the valve through

which the waters of the Salty River find admittance. Of course, this trespass may have been merely accidental; but remembering the warlike and unfriendly ways of the upper world, I personally suspect that the intrusion was planned with cunning design, and that other invading craft—possibly a whole invading fleet—may be expected to arrive. Fellow citizens, what is your opinion?"

AMID general silence the speaker took his seat—applause was apparently unknown among the Atlanteans. But this fact did not then enter into my thoughts; I was too much enraged at the tall young man's misstatements. With a lack of self-consciousness that I can explain only by my blinding fury, I found myself doing the unprecedented.

Springing excitedly to my feet, I demanded, hotly, in the native tongue, "Friends, may I say a word?"

Instantly hundreds of pairs of eyes were turned upon me in surprise; I saw that I had no more been expected to speak than if I had been a tree or a stone. But the glances that were darted at me were not unfriendly, and as yet I was too much incensed to regret my words.

"Certainly, you may say all you wish," rang out the clear, well-rounded tones of the lady leader of the debate. "This is the Hall of Public Enlightenment, you know, and any person with anything to say will gladly be heard."

"Go on, old sport, give it to them good!" whispered Stranahan into my ear, although he could not have caught the drift of what was happening; and, with his words ranking in my mind, I started toward the speaker's place.

But as I took my place before that silent, staring multitude, I wished that I could have been safely back in my seat. Something suspiciously like fear overcame me—what right had I to be addressing this strange assemblage? What reason to expect that I could speak their language intelligibly? Yet necessity prodded me on; and, after gaping stonily at the spectators, I found myself somehow uttering a series of more or less connected sounds. I did not say what I had intended, and I suspect that more than one English word got itself intertwined with my Atlantean vocabulary; but I was encouraged when I observed that all eyes were fixed upon me with apparent interest, and that no one openly laughed or so much as tittered, though one or two (and among them Stranahan) could hardly suppress a smile.

After a vague, sputtering introduction that I can not begin to recall, I found myself on fairly solid ground. I declared that I could answer many of the questions which the previous speaker had put; I explained that my companions and myself were not barbarians, being representatives of the highest of modern civilizations; I stated that we had no evil intentions, having come to Atlantis by accident, and certainly not being the forerunners of a wave of invasion; and, at the same time, I offered our thanks for the treatment already accorded us, and expressed our intention to abide by the laws of Atlantis and to act in conformity with the best traditions of the land.

As I took my seat, I could see from the faces of my hearers that I had produced a favorable effect. Many were the nods of approval that greeted me, and many the sympathetic smiles. But at the same time I could perceive that I had not made myself perfectly clear; and when a score of voices simultaneously requested that I return to the platform, I had no choice but to accede.

Questions regarding my native land were now

rained upon me in profusion. But whether because of my limited knowledge of the language or because the experience of the Atlanteans differed so fundamentally from my own, I had great difficulty in making myself understood. My description of the growth and attainments of the modern world was listened to with interest, but with a lack of comprehension that I thought almost idiotic. Thus, when I declared that the United States was a leading nation because of its population of a hundred million, its rare inventions and its prolific manufactures, my hearers merely looked blank and asked how the country ranked in art; and when I stated (what surely is self-evident to all patriotic Americans) that New York is the greatest city on earth because of its tall buildings and its capacity for housing a million human beings in one square mile, my audience regarded me with something akin to horror, and one of the men—evidently a dolt, for he seemed quite serious—asked whether no steps had ever been taken to abolish the evil.

But it was when describing my own career that I was most grievously misunderstood. Had I confessed to murder, the people could not have been more shocked than when I mentioned that I was one of the crew of a ship commissioned to ram and destroy other ships; and I felt that my prestige was ruined beyond repair when I stated that I had entered the war voluntarily. Even the most friendly hearers seemed to draw unconsciously away from me after my recital; loathing and disgust showed plainly in their faces, as though I had announced myself to be an African cannibal or a Polynesian head hunter. Only too plainly I perceived that what was termed heroism among my fellows was here regarded as villainy. It did little good to explain that war was a cherished custom in the upper world, and that patriotism was among the prime virtues; it was useless to plead that there might be reasons for taking the lives of men whom one had never seen, and that such reasons were generally recognized among civilized nations. The more I argued, the greater the abhorrence I aroused; beyond an occasional murmured "Agrippides was right," my words brought little direct reply. And at length I returned to my seat feeling myself to be in disgrace, yet curbing my embarrassment by inwardly cursing the stupidity of the Atlanteans.

The remaining business of the assemblage was disposed of quickly enough. Following my retreat, the tall young man again addressed the meeting, reminding his audience that they had not yet passed judgment upon us. "Fellow citizens," said he, in conclusion, "I have a proposal to make, which, so far as I can see, is the only one possible under the circumstances. Whether we like it or not, we must recognize that the intruders are here; and, though we did not will their presence, we must treat them humanely. Since we cannot dispose of them by violence and since we must accept their assurance that no others of their kind are to follow, we must let them remain, and see that they are educated and put to work like all other citizens. But one thing we must insist upon above all else: the isolation of Atlantis must be protected, and the countries above seas must never learn of our existence. Hence we must decree that, no matter how many years go by, none of the aliens shall ever return to the upper world!"

It was with a sinking heart and with the hopelessness of one being sentenced to life imprisonment, that I heard the assemblage of Atlanteans endorse this recommendation made by the tall young man on the platform.

CHAPTER XIV

The Upper World Club

DURING the next few hours, Captain Gavison and the new-found members of his crew were all provided with the native garb and lodged in sumptuous quarters in various parts of the city. They looked peculiar indeed in their new costumes of light blue and green and yellow, and grumbled not a little at the change; but they confessed to their relief at having left the X-111; and not even the prospect of neutralizing their remaining days in Atlantis sufficed to neutralize their joy.

As nearly as I could determine, they had had an altogether wretched time during the past few weeks. A spirit of panic had grown among them, following the failure of Rawson and myself to return from our searching expedition, and neither by bribe nor by threat could any other member of the crew be induced to venture into that wilderness where we had disappeared. And so they had all remained anxiously in the vicinity of the disabled ship, drinking the distilled water of the Salty River and snatching what food they could from the land while exhausting their vessel's reserve supplies. How long they could have held out it was impossible to say, but certainly they could not have held out long; madness had been overtaking them with the delay and the suspense; and, but for the timely arrival of the natives, bloody disaster might have ensued.

Yet, while they realized that they had been rescued from possible destruction, I must not give the impression that they were altogether contented with their new surroundings, or that their queer native garments constituted their only source of complaint. Being normal human beings, they found abundant cause for dissatisfaction. And, indeed, they were not much to blame, for how could they adapt themselves immediately to an environment so unfamiliar as that of Atlantis? For some time they walked about like men in a daze; or, rather, like men who know they are dreaming and expect shortly to awaken; they stared with incredulous eyes at the marble columns of the Sunken World, its sculpture-lined thoroughfares and statuesque palaces. And what wonder if they were dazzled and yet a little frightened by this beauty, which seemed to them so cold and alien a thing? What wonder if the more superstitious shuddered a little at times, and muttered to themselves in the presence of what they took to be the supernatural? What wonder if they missed the familiar things of the earth, the scenes and the faces they had left behind them, the habits they had discarded and the remembered life that was dwindling to a shadow?

Fortunately, they were not always free to brood over their misfortunes. Like those of their shipmates who had preceded them to Archeon, they were at once supplied with tutors who sought to teach them the Atlantean tongue. Each of them received at least two hours a day of personal instruction, and each was required to devote several hours to various prescribed written exercises. It need hardly be stated that not all of them took kindly to this enforced application; for most of them were anything but studious by nature; but the tutors persisted even though their task was a hard one, and prevailed by means of that magnetic dominance I had often noted in the Atlanteans; and all of the crew, from the grizzled McCrae to the callow young Barnfield, were soon plodding regularly over their lessons in grammar and spelling.

But among a group of nearly forty men, it was

but natural that some should make more willing and able students than others. And so, while the more backward were still struggling with the elements of Atlantean, others were striding toward a speaking knowledge. Among the latter was Captain Gavison, who still had a position to maintain, and could not let himself be outdone by his men. Whether because of a natural aptitude or of diligent application, he speedily outdistanced all his crew, with the exception (I must modestly admit) of one whose pre-war specialty had been Greek. And partly on account of his evident supremacy in Atlantean, but more largely owing to the force of ironclad habit, he was still the acknowledged leader of us all; his word still was like the word of a king, his approval still a favor to be courted and his anger a thing to make one quail, although his commission from the United States Navy Department could hardly give him any authority here in Atlantis.

I do not know whether it was at Captain Gavison's prompting, or whether it was at the suggestion of one of the men, that we took the step which was to band us more closely together. At all events, the step was inevitable; for all of us felt like kinsmen isolated among strangers, and our common experiences and common origin constituted an irresistible bond.

And so it was that we found ourselves convening one afternoon—the whole thirty-nine of us—in a little colonnaded court in one of the city parks. All of us were waiting in vociferous expectancy, for it had been whispered that important events were in store; and so we listened eagerly when Captain Gavison arrived, and took the center of the stage, launching at once into an address.

"The proposal has been made," he announced, beginning without formality, "that we all join forces by forming a social club. We're all in the same boat still, you see, even though we're out of the X-111. Most of us feel rather out of place down here in Atlantis; we find the people strange, the land stranger still, and the customs strangest of all. And so the best way will be to stick together and try to make things agreeable for one another. . . . And in this vein he continued for five or ten minutes, pointing out the advantages of union, the increased power as well as the social gain, the possibility of making our will felt in Atlantis if we acted in concert.

WHEN he had finished, he asked for opinions—and received them in abundance. . . .

"If we got together and started a club," summarized Stangale, whose views coincided with the majority, "things might begin to look a little less dead. Seems to me every day down here is Sunday!"

"Sure, and they've got lots of Sunday closing laws, too!" Stranahan contributed, with a wry grimace toward the massive columns and tinted statuary.

Very tactfully Captain Gavison reminded Stranahan that the question to be decided did not concern the Sunday regulations of the Atlanteans. And without further dalliance he raised his voice and inquired how many were in favor of a social club.

The proposal having been accepted by unanimous acclaim, the next question was one of nomenclature. Various names were suggested: "The Woodrow Wilson Club," "The Theodore Roosevelt Club," "The U. S. A. Club," "The X-111 Club," "The Underseas Association"—but finally, after much pointless debating, we decided that, since we were the sole representatives of the upper world in Atlantis, the most appropriate title would be "The Upper World Club."

Having threshed out this important matter, we

now felt it necessary to elect the officers of "The Upper World Club."

Obviously, there was only one possible nominee for President. It seemed almost a matter of form to propose the name of Gavison; and once this name had been mentioned, the election was settled, for there was no one daring enough to run in opposition or even to think of suggesting another candidate.

After being duly installed in office, the Captain made his inaugural address. It was brief and to the point. He began by thanking us in conventional terms for the honor and by assuring us that he would try to run the club as well as if it were a ship under his command. And he concluded with a declaration of policy: "We're all of us caught like rats in a trap, you know, so while we're here there's nothing to do but to try to make the best of our prison. And I think the Upper World Club should be the means. It should have, I believe, the following objects: first, to bring us together for social purposes. Secondly, it should give us the chance to discuss our problems in this strange world, and should be the means of expressing our combined views to the Atlanteans. Lastly, it should keep up all together, so that we can act in unison if the time ever comes to make a dash for liberty."

"That time will never come!" I surprised myself by exclaiming, after Gavison had lapsed into silence. And, finding all eyes bent upon me inquiringly, I felt bound to continue.

"Let us not deceive ourselves by the thought of escape," I proceeded, stepping toward the center of the assemblage. "We are buried beneath thousands of feet of water, and for all practical purposes America is as far from us as the moon. Even if there were a way back, what good would that do us when we cannot even leave this city against the will of the Atlanteans? No, my friends, let us look facts in the face. We shall remain here till we are gray and toothless, and shall never see the United States again. And let us try to reconcile ourselves to that certainty. Let us try to become citizens of Atlantis, and share in the life about us . . ."

In this vein I continued for some minutes, while my hearers followed me with transparent interest, and reluctantly nodded agreement.

In general, my words may have been without effect; but they had at least one result I had not anticipated. For when, a few moments later, Gavison announced that nominations were in order for Vice-President, I was surprised to find that my name was the first put forward, and that no others were put forward at all—so that I was selected without opposition.

After I had duly thanked my fellow club members for this honor, the President turned to me, and said, "Harkness, I appoint you a committee of one to confer with me in drawing up the constitution of the Upper World Club." And with that the meeting adjourned.

And thus began my intimacy with Captain Gavison. I do not know how seriously he took the Upper World Club and its constitution, for at most times his grim, firm face was inscrutable; but he acted as if he took it seriously indeed, and he and I spent hours together debating and planning for the club, almost as though we had had to draw up a pact not for thirty-nine individuals but for thirty-nine sovereign states.

How much the club profited from our activities shall always be a question in my mind; but I am certain that I personally profited a great deal, and make bold to believe that even Gavison was not without benefit. Although he had a habit of shutting his thin lips stoically and glaring upon the world with a stern, im-

passive air, an occasional look of weariness and even of melancholy in his keen gray eyes told me that he too was suffering from loneliness; and while he would have been the last man in the world to make such an admission openly, he made it tacitly by the amount of time he spent in my company, theoretically drawing up the constitution of the Upper World Club. He was always far from loquacious; frequently he was taciturn indeed, and would simply sit before me with a detached and meditative air, occasionally grunting some comment or question in response to my remarks. Perhaps the consciousness of the former gulf between us would not leave him; but all the while I felt that we were drawing together, were even beginning to look upon one another with a genuine, although undemonstrative regard. Certainly, he was emerging by degrees from the thick shell of his reticence, as I was emerging from mine. We began quite naturally by a discussion of Atlantis and the Atlanteans; and gradually we ventured into more personal subjects. There came a day when I went so far as to tell him of my former life, my training in ancient Greek, my betrothal to Alma Huntley; and, responsive to my confidence, he offered me one or two glimpses into his own past, and made himself appear more human than ever before, by stating that he had a wife and two little daughters in New York, who no doubt were even now mourning him as lost.

"You know, Harkness, that's the hardest thing of all to bear," he said, while his thin fingers stroked his bristly chin ruminatingly, and the drawn lines of his gaunt face enhanced his habitual gravity. "If there were only some way of getting word to them, it wouldn't be so bad. But I might be dead for all they know—and would you believe it, Harkness, sometimes it seems to me as if I'm actually in my tomb." And the Captain averted his gaze, and after staring into vacancy for an indeterminate period, he continued, speaking more rapidly, and almost with brusqueness, "Now you see why I'm so anxious to get back! For my own part, it wouldn't matter so much, but I can't help thinking it must be Hell for those waiting up there!" And he concluded by drawing vivid pictures of blue-eyed Martha, his wife, and of the auburn-haired six-year-old Ellen, who was waiting for the father that would never come back.

To all this I listened earnestly; and when Gavison had finished, I tried to say whatever I could by way of consolation. In order to make his woes seem less by comparison, I exaggerated my own; I discoursed upon the misfortune of being sundered from my old father and mother (who, as a matter of fact, had previously been sundered from me by death), and dilated upon my grief at losing Alma Huntley—although, to tell the truth, she had been almost driven out of my thoughts by the proximity of one even fairer than she.

It was from the time of our mutual confessions that my real friendship with Gavison dated. Not unnaturally, we now lost sight of our former positions as superior officer and subordinate, and began to act unrestrainedly toward one another as man to man. And while I was on terms of fellowship with all the crew and intimate with several, my attachment to Gavison became the closest of all; and often of an afternoon, when he had completed the day's studies, or of an evening before the great golden orbs had been extinguished, we might have been seen strolling together along the winding colonnades, or seated on seaweed cushions in a marble hall, discussing the art or the odd ways of Atlantis, practicing the Atlantean speech, exchanging reminiscences of the world we had

left, or merely absorbed in one of those long silences that marked our queer acquaintanceship.

CHAPTER XV

The Pageant of the Good Destruction

WHILE my intimacy with Captain Gavison was ripening, I had of course not forgotten one whose friendship meant more to me than that of any man. In the exhilarating moments of that first happy interview with Aelios, I had had visions of speaking with her often, visions of an Atlantis made bright by her very presence. But before long I began to feel that I had been too sanguine. Although I still caught glimpses of her when she came to give Stranahan his daily lesson, and although she would sometimes nod ingratiatingly to me, it was long before I had another opportunity to speak to her, since I could not detach her from the company of the other tutors. And so day after long uneasy day dragged by until they had piled up into a week, and slow, protracted weeks until they had accumulated into a month, before at last we had another conversation.

Then came a day when I observed her by chance in one of the great festooned courts at the base of a towering campanile. She saw me even before I saw her; and approaching of her own volition, she flashed upon me a smile that seemed to make the universe stand still with joy. "I am glad to see you, my friend," she said, simply and with unaffected kindness. "I have been wanting to tell you about our coming pageant. I know you will not want to miss it, for it will explain many things you have been wondering about."

"What pageant do you mean?" I asked.

"The Festival of the Good Destruction," she explained. "Every year, as I believe I've told you, we hold a celebration on the anniversary of the Submergence. This year it will take the form of a pageant. It will be the Three Thousand and Thirty-fifth anniversary."

"When will it take place?"

"In eight days. It will commence at noon in the Agripides Theatre, which you will very easily find, since it is in the center of town. I certainly hope to see you there."

"I certainly hope to see you," I declared, quite truthfully. But at the same time a shadow crossed my thoughts. Hesitatingly I had to confess that, after all, I would not be able to go.

"Not be able to go?" she demanded, in manifest disappointment. "What other engagement can you possibly have?"

Since some definite excuse appeared to be necessary, I explained that I could not pay my admission.

"Pay your admission?" echoed Aelios, in such shrill surprise that I thought she had misunderstood me. "What on earth are you thinking of? Do you imagine we are barbarians?"

"I'm afraid I haven't made myself clear," I hastened to explain. "Where I come from it is customary to pay upon going to a theatre."

"Really?" demanded Aelios, so incredulously that I thought her most naïve.

"Of course!" I assured her, in such a manner as to stamp all doubt from her mind.

"How queer!" she exclaimed. "How very queer! Still, I do remember hearing that people used to have to pay for everything before the Submergence. But that was so long ago, I thought the world had outgrown such crudity."

"I don't see anything wrong about paying for what you get," I stated, thinking this the most topsy turvy land in the world. "Don't they really charge you for going to theatres down here?"

"Of course not! How could any one be so gross? Fancy being charged for beauty or ecstasy or dreams! Why, one would as soon think of paying for the air one breathes or the light that shines upon one! The State naturally recognizes the theatre as the birth-right of every citizen, just as it recognizes poetry and music and education. We all take part in giving the performances, and of course every one is invited."

"And do you yourself take part?" I queried, my personal interest in Aelios overshadowing my general interest in the native customs.

"Oh, yes, I try to do my share," she acknowledged, with a faint blush that seemed only to accentuate her beauty. "I sometimes lead in the dances."

"And a most exquisite dancer you make!" said I, recalling my first enchanting glimpse of Aelios on the colonnade outside the city.

But before I had had time for further compliments, she had whispered a light "Good-bye," and had gone tripping toward the further end of the court and out of sight through a little half concealed door at the base of the campanile.

IT hardly need be stated that I waited eagerly for the day of the Pageant. Not that I was looking forward to the entertainment itself; I remembered only that Aelios had seen fit to invite me, and that I should be able to see her again. So utterly out of my head was I that her bright face now appeared to me at all times of the day and night; her least smile, her slightest gesture, her most careless nod, was re-enacted a thousand times in my memory. And what if somewhere in the past there had been an Alma Huntley whom I had admired and fancied I had loved?—she was now no more than a ghost amid the shadows of a vanished world.

Certainly, I had no thought of Alma when at last the day of the pageant arrived. I was jubilant merely at the prospect of speaking with Aelios again; I could hardly restrain my impatience, but left for the festivities a full hour earlier than necessary. Such was my eagerness that I could not even walk at a normal pace, but unconsciously hastened my steps as when, in my native land, I had feared to miss a street car or be too late for an appointment with Alma.

But the day's pleasure was to be unexpectedly varied. As I hastened through the streets, striding more rapidly than ever before in this land of leisure, I heard a well known voice shouting behind me, "Hey, wait a minute! Where are you going so fast?"

With a sinking heart I wheeled about—to face the grinning Stranahan.

"Great Jerusalem, you were racing so I could hardly catch up!" he panted, as he joined me. "Where you bound for, anyway?"

"Where are you bound for?" I countered.

"To the pageant, of course," he informed me. And, amiably unconscious that he might be interfering with my plans, he suggested, "Well, we both seem to be going in the same direction, so what do you say to going together?"

"Yes, let's go together," I had to acquiesce; and so it happened that Stranahan and I reached the Agripides Theatre arm in arm.

As I might have known, we were much too early; the doors were open, but the audience had scarcely begun to arrive. Indeed, the whole enormous open-air theatre was occupied only by a few children who

danced and played about the stage and romped from tier to tier of the seaweed-cushioned marble seats.

Upon entering, we paused for a view of the giant theatre, which seemed large enough to accommodate an entire community, and which was constructed with a simple and yet majestic art that I thought admirable. The seat arrangement was that of the typical Greek theatre, but the stage surprised me, not only by its size but by its general appearance, for it was not less than two or three acres in extent, and was completely enclosed by a ring of columns bearing a dome apparently inlaid with ebony and gold. But what particularly caught my attention was an object which was evidently not an integral part of the building—an amorphous mass many feet in height and covering more than half of the stage, but completely mantled in a linen-like white cloth that was like a garment of mystery.

But Stranahan would brook not more than a moment's pause for viewing the building. Impetuously he started down the steeply sloping central aisle, and did not halt until he had reached the front row, where he appropriated the best seat as nonchalantly as though it had been reserved for him. Of course, I had no choice except to deposit myself at his side; but I could not help wishing that he had chosen a less conspicuous position.

It was not long before the theatre began to fill. Singly and in whole family groups the people were arriving, children and gray old men and bright-faced girls and youths; and all wore happy, expectant smiles, and all were clad in their pastel-tinted gowns that made them look like animated flowers. I had a chance now to observe the Atlanteans as never before; and, as never before, I was struck by the exceptional number of well formed and beautiful faces; by the fact that every one seemed tranquil and contented, and that there was little if any sign of tragedy or sorrow. Here was no evidence of the worn and withered, the distorted, the grotesque, the wolfish, the weasel and the bovine types so common on earth; even the old seemed to wear a sweet and placid and at times a beautiful look, which contrasted strangely with the sour and crochety expression I had regarded as natural; and most of the faces bore the imprint of something akin to poetry and music, an exalted something that I had first noted in Aelios and that set the Atlanteans apart from every other race I had ever known.

Even to be among these people seemed to produce a strange and uplifting effect upon me. I do not know what mysterious psychic currents were at work, and I cannot say that my imagination did not betray me; but I do distinctly remember that, as the theatre gradually filled, a singular sense of well-being and almost of thankfulness came upon me, a feeling of spiritual tranquility and repose, as though by some subtle transference of thought I had shared the mood of the multitude and become one with them in heart. Even Stranahan seemed to have been affected, for he had none of his usual boisterousness; he talked but little, and there was a rapt and almost devout look in his eyes, as though he too had caught the glimmer of some rare loveliness.

Yet there was still a shadow across my happiness—and possibly across his as well. As I scanned the faces that thronged down the aisles and along the tiers of seats, there was one smiling countenance for which I searched in vain. Surely, Aelios had not forgotten the day, nor had she forgotten her implied promise to see me here; yet till the last seat was filled by the expectant crowd, I scrutinized the faces

of the newcomers, only to be assured that Aelios was not among them.

But after about an hour, my thoughts were forcibly recalled from Aelios to the spectacle in the great theatre. A sudden flickering of the great golden orbs attracted our attention; and we noted that those luminaries were being dimmed as though by unseen hands until they had less than half their usual brightness. At the same time, long shafts of light began to shoot out simultaneously from all points of the horizon—multicolored shafts that included all the hues of the rainbow. In wide ambling curves they met the dark glass of the roof, splashing it with red and purple, orange and green, lavender and violet; and for many minutes the play and interplay of color continued, the searchlights seeming to work out all manner of patterns and arabesques which endured for a moment and vanished.

THE one thing to which I could liken this pageant of light was the music that sometimes preceded theatrical performances in our own land. The flashing colors had all the ethereal loveliness of music; and like music they prepared one for a mood of rapture and contemplation. And when at length the original lights had faded out, to be replaced by others that shone directly down upon the open platform or stage, this mood was strengthened and intensified; and at the same time I felt that we had but beheld an introduction to the real exhibition.

Suddenly, in the illumination of the many-hued searchlights, a white-gowned woman appeared upon the stage. She was very young, scarcely more than a girl, I thought, and her face had something of that sweetness and radiance which distinguished Aelios; while in the colored glow of the everchanging lights she seemed some shimmering, ethereal thing, possibly a butterfly, possibly some apparition as unreal as rainbows or moonlit cloud.

I was surprised, accordingly, when the fairy-like creature began to speak. Or perhaps it would not be correct to say that she spoke; her words came in a soft, wonderfully melodious voice more than half like song; and merely to listen to her was to be lulled and soothed as though by music.

Yet, despite the spirit of exaltation and almost of worship she aroused in me, I did not miss the drift of what she was saying.

"Fellow citizens," she declared, while a hush came over the assemblage, and all strained forward so as to lose not a syllable, "fellow citizens, for this year's celebration we have decided to present a historical pageant. Imagine yourselves borne backward almost thirty-one hundred years, to those days when the Submergence was not yet an accomplished fact, and Agripides stood before the old National Assembly urging the Good Destruction. Agripides shall now appear before you, as he appeared to your forefathers in the lands above the sea; you shall be the National Assembly before which he speaks; and he shall present his views to you as he presented them to our ancestors, and depict for you, as he depicted for them, the reasons why Atlantis should become a sunken continent. Behold, here comes Agripides!"

With a wide-sweeping bow the speaker ceased, retreating from view through some unseen door; and at the same instant some invisible instrument sent forth a sound like a trumpet blast, and from the rear of the stage a tall figure appeared, walking slowly and with head bent low as though in thought.

"Agripides! Agripides!" came one or two indistinct murmurs from behind me, but there was no such

tumult of applause as I might have expected. Yet all eyes were directed eagerly toward the newcomer, and I found myself a partner in the tense excitement of the multitude.

Even had I not heard the name Agripides, I should have recognized the advancing figure from the bust shown me by Aelios—there was the same bearded countenance, the same broad and noble brow, the same furrowed and sympathetic features. But one characteristic there was which the bust could not show, and which, while merely incidental, struck me with peculiar force. The garments of Agripides were not gay-hued, like those of modern Atlanteans, but were of a deep and somber brown; and they clung to his body so closely as apparently to interfere with his walking, and to make him look disquietingly like an animated corpse.

But I forgot all such irrelevant impressions the moment that Agripides—or, rather, his living representative—had uttered his first word. "Fellow members of the National Assembly," said he, with a low bow, while in the audience an awed silence held sway, "for the hundredth time I address you on the subject of the proposed Submergence. And for the hundredth time I remind you that we have no choice in the matter: it is a question of the submergence either of the land of Atlantis or of its soul. Let me prove this to you, Members of the Assembly; let me show you how near the soul of Atlantis already is to submergence. Watch carefully as a stream of typical present-day men and women passes by."

The speaker ceased, and from invisible corridors on both sides of the stage came a noise as of shuffled feet, chattering voices, horns and bells and clattering wheels. "By the holy Father, if we're not back in the old U. S. A.!" muttered Stranahan so loud that many of the audience could hear him; and he leaned so far forward that I feared he would fall over the railing into the stage.

But the spectacle before us was so engrossing as to make me forget even Stranahan's absurd conduct. Very quickly I came to agree that Atlantis before the Submergence must indeed have been hideous; I had never known anything quite so ugly as the scene we now witnessed. From both sides of the stage a slow procession of men and women began to file, the two streams passing each other and trailing out in opposite directions; and the faces and figures of the people were the most repulsive I have ever seen. Some were so lean and scrawny as to remind me of walking skeletons; others, fat and bloated, waddled along like living caricatures with scarcely the power of self-locomotion; the majority had an unnaturally sallow, flushed or mottled complexion that seemed to set them off as a species apart. And their clothes were in accord with their appearance; they were all clad in a drab brown or black, some with a peculiar steely collar that encircled their chins and ears, some with strange metallic waist-bands that prevented them from turning in any direction, some with ornamental brass spikes that elevated the soles of their feet inches above their heels and converted their walking into a form of hobbling.

But what chiefly interested me were the faces of the people. Not a few, with heavy paunches, and baggy, feeble cheeks, reminded me of nothing so much as of a certain bristly domestic beast; not a few others had features grotesquely like those of baboons, bears, wolves, foxes, weasels, or tigers. And a majority looked like nothing so much as the prey of tigers, weasels, and foxes. Their eyes had a hunted expression, and their whole manner was one of timidity;

they seemed continually confused and frightened and ready to run at any sound, and yet had something of the cowed look of creatures beaten into resigned despair.

All the while, as they proceeded across the stage, they produced a perfect pandemonium of squeaks, grunts, hoots, rumblings, howlings, and snarlings, some seeming quite familiar to me, others sounding like voices of the wilderness. The acting, I thought, was marvelous; it was executed so perfectly that for the time I had quite forgotten it was acting at all. Hearing the uproar and looking at the dark-robed, distorted multitude, I could not but think by contrast of Aelios and the grace and beauty that surrounded her; and I missed her even more keenly than before, and wondered impatiently if I should not yet see her at the pageant.

At length, to my relief, the last of the uncouth mob had gone trooping off the stage, and only the tall figure of Agripides remained. "Members of the Assembly," resumed the statesman, after all had again become quiet, "you have now had a close view of our typical citizens. Do you not believe them more deeply submerged than if a thousand fathoms of water rolled above them? Or if you are not yet convinced, let me show you these people in their normal occupations."

As though at a prearranged signal, three or four huge instruments, with long segmented oblong belts moving on wheels, were dragged to the center of the stage by half-invisible wires. I recognized these machines as curious forms of treadmills, for on each of the belts a man had been deposited, and each man was forcing his legs back and forth at tremendous speed, as though running in a desperate hurry. But no matter how furiously they worked, all the men remained in exactly the same place, for the belts slid backward precisely as fast as their feet pressed forward.

"Saints in heaven," opined Stranahan, with a puzzled frown, "they'd get there just as fast if they took their time!"

After a minute or two the treadmills were pulled off the stage and Agripides again briefly addressed the audience. "My friends," said he, "I will now illustrate for you another of the leading occupations of our times."

I DO not know what rare art of stagecraft was then applied, for as if by magic a bright bed of flowers sprang to life before us, and long-stemmed purple and yellow blossoms resembling tulips and hollyhocks waved above some retiring white-budding plant reminding me of the violet. But I was to be disappointed if I expected anything beautiful to follow. From one side of the stage came a series of oaths, growls, curses, shrieks, hisses, and mutterings, gradually increasing in fierceness and volume; and soon an amorphous mass of squirming, twisting, embattled men writhed into view. I could not tell how many of them there were, except that they were numbered by the dozen; and I could not determine what they looked like, except that they were all soberly attired. But it was as if a storm had been let loose among them; they were literally tumbling over one another, wrestling with the ferocity of lions, snatching violently at one another's arms, legs and necks, until they seemed little more than a blur of convulsive, wildly agitated trunks and limbs.

"Holy Methuselah, it's a new kind of football!" cried Stranahan, excitedly, as he craned his long neck far forward for a better view of the contest.

But before I had time to chide Stranahan on this



Then, while the clamor increased and the buildings heaved and wavered with the motion of tossing ships at sea, the ground beneath them gave a sharp lunge downward; and like toy castles, the towers all at once collapsed. . . . But scarcely had the thunder of the overthrown walls died down, when a new and more ominous roaring came to my ears, a tumult as of Niagara or of sea waves splashing the cliffs. . . .

senseless outburst, I was occupied by a new observation. The struggling men were advancing across the stage, and slowly intruding upon the flower beds. But none seemed to notice, and the pandemonium continued until the actors were beating down the flowers on all sides and not a hollyhock or tulip or violet remained.

Then suddenly one of the men was thrust out of the wild multitude, and lay on the ground as if dead, his clothes ripped and torn, his body gashed and bleeding. But no one seemed to notice him, and his shrieks and howls rang forth until another had been flung aside with broken limbs, and then another, and then another. In the end only two remained standing, both grappling desperately for a little metallic disk that glittered a deep yellow. With bestial snarls and screeches they wrestled over this trinket; and at length, still wrestling, and with faces blood-red and distorted, they tumbled, moaning, off the stage.

After this exhibition there was silence for several minutes. I was glad when at length Agripides seemed to feel that his audience was ready for a change of mood, and again took the center of the stage.

"Members of the National Assembly," he said, "you have now observed modern life in two of its more common phases. You will find something no less familiar in the third phase, which I am about to present to you."

This time a gigantic clattering black machine was rolled on to the stage by some unseen power, its innumerable wheels and belts and chains in rapid motion, some of them moving so swiftly as to look like whirling shadows. But it was not the speed or smoothness of its action that made the mechanism remarkable: all about its side, in a long, even row, stood scores of grimy-faced and sooty men, their feet clamped to the ground by iron vises, their arms fastened by long rods to the wheels above. And all the while those rods were moving, moving with rhythmic, clock-like regularity, moving unceasingly up and down, pulling the arms of the men with them, first the right arm and then the left, then again the right and then the left, as though they had done so for all eternity and would continue to do so for all eternity.

"The devil take me," muttered Stranahan, who had to have his say, "it ain't the men that work the machines! It's the machines that work the men!"

I am afraid that Stranahan's remarks diverted my attention and made me miss part of the performance, for when next I turned my eyes to the stage, the scene was much changed. A great claw-like steel device was reaching out from the interior of the machine, seizing one of the men, wrenching him from his position as though he had been a misplaced screw, and casting him bleeding to the floor. And while he lay there moaning and helpless, a clamor of shouts was heard from off stage, and a score of tattered men came rushing in and threw themselves down before the machine as if in reverence. And, as though endowed with intelligence, the machine seemed to hear, for it reached out the same great claw-like hand, clutched one of the men at random, and thrust him into the place of the rejected one. And now the arms of the newcomer began to work up and down, up and down unremittingly, accompanying the steel rods in the same even and automatic fashion as the arms of his predecessor.

The next feature on the program was a long oration delivered in Agripides' most celebrated words; following which the actor prepared the way for the climax by a few explanatory comments. "Members of

the National Assembly," said he, still using phrases first uttered three thousand years before, "I wish you to look carefully at Axios, which, as you know, is one of the leading commercial cities of our age. First gaze upon its domes and towers as they are now familiar to you; then behold them as they will be when the unleashed waters of the Atlantic come sweeping across them; then open your eyes wide for a foreglimpse of our land in the golden era after the Submergence."

EVEN as the last words were uttered, my attention was drawn to the huge amorphous mass which lay cloaked in white linen at one side of the stage. Invisible hands seemed to take hold of the covering; slowly it was lifted into the air, then slowly pulled to one side and out of sight. At first I could only gaze in astonishment—the strangest of all conceivable things was being unbared! Distinctly I was reminded of the paintings I had seen in various of the halls of Archeon—that which stared before me was a city in miniature, but a city such as I would have expected no Atlantean to conceive. Not the faintest resemblance did it bear to this undersea realm of statue-like temples and many-columned palaces; rather, it was like a city of the modern world. Row upon unbending row of box-like edifices, apparently of granite or brick, loomed at irregular heights and with flat, ungarished roofs; tier after tier of little oblong windows looked out from the smoke-stained sides of the towers; slender defiles, so narrow that they reminded one of light-wells, separated the opposing ranks of masonry; and at the base of these dreary gray pits swarmed masses of dark-robed men and women, jammed together so compactly that one wondered if they were not standing on each other's toes.

"By the Blessed Mother, if it ain't little Old New York!" muttered Stranahan, nudging me knowingly in the side.

Even as he spoke, I was startled by a noise as of a thunder clap. And the next instant, the midget men and women scattered pellmell, vanishing through little openings in the walls. Meanwhile the thunder claps continued, loud-rumbling and resonant, one crash peeling and reverberating before the echoes of the last had died away; and miniature lightnings darted and flared from the great greenish vault above. As the display proceeded, it grew constantly brighter and more vivid; and I was wondering what the sequel would be, when suddenly there came a blast so loud that I clapped my hands to my ears in terror. Simultaneously a brilliant blade of light seemed to cut dagger-like through the buildings, wrapping them momentarily in a sheet of flame; the walls seemed to be heaving and trembling as though in an earthquake's claws, and there came to my ears a rattling and crashing as of falling masonry.

Then, while the clamor increased and the buildings heaved and wavered with the motion of tossing ships at sea, the ground beneath them gave a sharp lunge downward; and like toy castles, the towers all at once collapsed, some falling over their neighbors in crashing confusion, some shaken into great dusty piles of mortar and stone, some stripped of their walls yet still standing with gaunt contorted ribs of steel, some bursting into flame that glared and crackled fiendishly and poured out dense, black spirals of smoke.

But scarcely had the thunder of the overthrown walls died down when a new and more ominous roaring came to my ears, a tumult as of Niagara or of sea-waves splashing the cliffs. Out of the great earthen basin into which the ruined city had subsided,

there issued a foaming confusion of waters, as though a reservoir had burst its dam; and from all sides a white-flecked torrent came plunging down upon the wrecked towers, struggling and storming above their lower stories as if to wash them utterly away. It seemed that the waters were to have their will, for the towers were sinking, visibly sinking beneath the waves. Heap after gigantic heap of debris dipped its head into the waters and was lost to view; edifice after looming edifice, dismantled and battered, was engulfed by the insatiable flood. And now the fires no longer burned and the smoke no longer soared; now only two or three tortured steel columns reached out of the indifferent sea; now only one was left, one lean and crooked metallic shaft like the agonized clutching hand of a drowning man. But soon even this had slipped from view, and the frothy-tongued, deep-blue waters gave no sign that a city had ever barred their path.

And as the last trace of old Atlantis vanished, a grayness as of twilight suffused the scene; the golden lights became dim, and dimmer still, until they had fluttered out altogether, and blackness blotted all things from our gaze.

But as we sat there spellbound in the dark, feeling like men who have beheld the end of all things, there came an airy change to break the dreariness of our mood. From far, far away, apparently whole worlds away, issued a faint tinkling music, more like the song of elves than of any mortal being. It was half like the loveliness that one hears in dreams, and more than half like the remote ghostly melodies borne to one across the wind; but gradually it grew nearer, gradually louder and more distinct, although its ethereal and fairy-like quality still remained. At length I recognized that it proceeded from a chorus of voices, a wonderfully sweet womanly chorus whose members may have been human but who seemed little less than angelic. For it was with a divine exaltation that they sang, and their tones were the tones of immortal sweetness and hope, and they seemed to assure me that all was well with the world and with life, and that beauty and happiness must triumph.

As the singing continued, the darkness was gradually dispersed; yet the great orb above did not resume the full brightness of the Atlantean day, but remained subdued to a rose-tinged twilight glow. And in that twilight a troop of shimmering-gowned dancing maidens appeared, swinging from side to side with superbly harmonious movements of arm and waist and ankle until they seemed not so much individual dancers as parts of the eternal rhythm of the universe. But whether the singing proceeded from them or from persons unseen was more than I could judge; for just then my eye was caught by the leader of the dancers, and my thoughts were as if paralyzed. As she glided from side to side with movements like music, she smiled a gloriously sweet smile; and that smile seemed to be bent full upon me, though here my imagination may have borne false reports. But with furiously thumping heart and a surging of something dangerously like tenderness, I realized that Aelios had kept her promise to see me at the pageant.

CHAPTER XVI

An Official Summons

THREE or four days after the pageant, I was surprised to receive a visitor in the shape of a serious-looking gray old man whom I did not remember ever having seen before. In his hand he bore a little blue-sealed parchment scroll, on which

my name had been inscribed in the native language; and from his grave manner, and particularly by the significant way in which he held the document, I feared that his mission might prove of ominous importance.

My first impression was that I had unwittingly violated some local law, and was being summoned to court to answer for the crime. But this fear was swiftly dissipated. "I congratulate you, young man," said my visitor, having determined that I was the person he sought. "This is an occasion such as comes but once in a lifetime." And with a sedate and deferential air, and apparently not surmising that the nature of his mission was still a mystery to me, he passed the little document to me; following which he congratulated me again, and solemnly bowed his way out of the room.

I now suspected that I was either the recipient of some high honor or the appointee to some responsible office. It is no wonder, accordingly, that my fingers trembled when I ripped open the blue seal, and that in my eagerness I almost tore the parchment as well. But again my expectations were to prove ill-founded. The message turned out to be very brief; and, far from providing cause either for exultation or dismay, it served merely to puzzle me.

"To the respected Anson Harkness," ran the words, which were handsomely formed in the native script, "the Committee on Selective Assignments wishes to announce that it is ready for the hearings and examinations in his case. If he will therefore be so kind as to present himself at the Committee offices any noon during the next ten days, he may be assured that the investigations will be carried out with a minimum of delay and a decision promptly rendered."

And that was all, except for the signature of the Head of the Committee! Not a word as to what the Selective Assignments might be! Not a word as to the nature of the "hearings and examinations!" Time after time I re-read this queer message, scrutinizing it until I had memorized it in its entirety; but the more I read the more perplexed I became, and I could almost believe myself the target of some practical joker. Just what was to be investigated? And what decision was to be reached? Was it that my conduct was thought improper and was to be reviewed? that I was considered too scornful of local customs, or too friendly to Aelios? Or—judging from the congratulatory manner of the gray-haired one—was I somehow deemed worthy of reward, possibly through the connivance of Aelios? Or was I to be examined as prize scholars are sometimes examined before being granted a scholarship?

To confess the truth, none of these possibilities appeared very credible to me. But I could think of nothing more plausible, and at length was forced to recognize that the mystery was too deep for my penetration. The only reasonable course would be to consult one of the natives, who could doubtless answer all my questions without any trouble. And since I was acquainted with only one of the natives besides my tutor, and since it would give me particular pleasure to consult that one, I decided that, if possible, I should refer the baffling document to Aelios.

But how to isolate Aelios long enough for a conversation was in itself a problem. After some thought, however, I conceived an idea which seemed promising: if I could determine where Aelios lived and then pay her a visit, I might solve the mystery of the Selective Assignments at the same time as I made possible a closer intimacy with Aelios herself.

Yet it was only by a severe effort that I found the

courage to carry out my plans and to follow Aelios one afternoon after the conclusion of her day's instruction. Through innumerable curving lanes and avenues I trailed her and her fellow tutors, pressing close to the columns and the walls of the building, like a detective tracking his prey. At length, when we seemed to be approaching the outskirts of the city, Aelios waved a pleasant farewell to her companions, and started off alone down a little path bordered by a deep-red geranium-like flower. Thinking this to be my opportunity, I hastened my footsteps; but before I could overtake her she had reached the end of the path, and, quite oblivious of my approach, had entered the arching doorway of a house—or, should I call it a palace?—with curving convex walls of the color of pearl.

For several minutes I stood wavering without. And it was in half-timid hesitancy that at last I forced my feet to the threshold and urged my hands to rap at the violet stained-glass panels of the door.

It was but a minute before the sound of approaching footsteps notified me that I had not knocked in vain. But in that minute I was swept by wild hopes and still wilder torments and regrets. Would it be Aelios herself that answered me? Or would it be some member of her family, possibly her mother or father, or else a sister almost as charming as herself? And, if so, what should I say? and on what business pretend to seek a conference with Aelios?

While I was wrapped in such thoughts, the door swung open, and I found myself face to face—not with Aelios, nor with her mother or father, nor with a sister of hers! But a young man of perhaps twenty-five, broad-browed and sparkling-eyed like most of the Atlanteans, stood looking inquiringly out at me.

"Is this—is this where Aelios lives?" I gasped, in embarrassment.

"Yes, Aelios lives here," he returned, in matter-of-fact tones. And then, with a winning smile, "You would like to see her?"

I admitted that he had surmised correctly, and was relieved to be admitted into the house without further questioning. Having passed through a broad hallway or vestibule illumined by large, swinging orange-colored lamps, we entered a daintily tapestried sitting room featured by lanterns of pale blue. The young man bade me be seated on the seaweed-decorated sofa, and then left me momentarily to myself; and in that brief snatch of solitude I found myself assailed by storms of jealous questions. Who was the young man? And in what relationship did he stand to Aelios? Was he perchance some suitor of hers? Or was he merely her brother? Or was it possible—oh, unspeakable thought!—that she was already married, and that this was her husband?

At the latter reflection I experienced in advance all the pangs of unsuccessful love. My head swam with senseless fury; I was weighed down with anticipatory despair, and saw myself the victim of hopes that could never be fulfilled. I had just reached the darkest point of my broodings, and was just telling myself that of course I could never attract so admirable a woman as Aelios, when I heard a well known melodious voice murmuring, "What is the matter today, my friend? What are you so depressed about?"

RECALLED from my dejection as from a bad dream, I sprang up to take the hand of Aelios, who was smiling as graciously as though my visit had been expected and even welcomed.

But what I next said I cannot recall. No doubt it was some bit of nonsense not worth repeating; indeed,

it would perhaps have been some bit of sentimental nonsense, had I not recalled the existence of the unknown young man. But since I was too diffident to inquire who he might be, and since the thought of him remained with me in spite of Aelios' kindness, I refrained from all sentimental advances in this, our first private meeting. It is true, that whenever her blue eyes flashed, they drew me toward her like twin magnets; it is true, that whenever she smiled her inexpressibly sweet smile, I yearned to dash down all barriers in one long fervent confession; yet I was thankful even to be able to sit side by side with her quietly talking. In the wide years that separate me now from that brief enchanted interview, my memory has lost track of what she said, while retaining how she said it; I can recall the sparkling eagerness with which her words poured forth, like the wavelets of a rapid crystal stream; I can recapture the sage nodding and tossing of her head, the ripples of deep feeling that passed and repassed on her mobile countenance, the luminescence as from some inner sun that would make her whole face shine as she uttered some rare bit of wit or fancy. But I do not even know the subject of our discussion, except that it was a theme suggested by her and that it was impersonal; I only know that it was she who did most of the talking while I looked on in awed worship, and that either she was blind to my reverence for her or else chose to ignore it.

It was not until I rose to leave that my thoughts reverted to the subject which had brought me to see Aelios.

And then, because the hour was late and my mood was no longer prosaic, I did not choose to discuss that topic long. I merely showed Aelios the letter, which she glanced at briefly and with a broad smile.

Then she surprised me by congratulating me just as the gray-haired bearer of the message had done congratulations which meant so much.

But she was exceedingly chary of information. "If you will go to the Committee offices," she suggested, "the whole matter will be made much clearer to you than I could make it." And, after directing me where to find the offices, she added, "I'd advise you to waste no time, or else you may lose your turn and have to wait another half year. You know, that's what happened once to my cousin Argol, who met you at the door just before."

Genuinely gratified that my doubts about Cousin Argol had been dispersed, I thanked Aelios and turned to leave.

My heart pattered most happily when I found her accompanying me to the outer door; and I felt an actual thrill of joy when she pressed her little hand firmly in my great one, and murmured, in tones that could leave no doubt of her sincerity.

"Come again, my friend. Come whenever you wish some one to talk with. I shall ever and always be glad to see you."

And it was with a glow of triumph that I found myself walking down the flower-bordered walk toward the main avenue. Aelios was more friendly than I had had any reason to expect!—her company was even more charming than I had imagined! Considering all things, I had every cause to be thankful, and who knew but that some day—

But here my thoughts reached a dazzling veil beyond which I would not allow them to penetrate, for there were still heights that I could not mount even in my most daring fancies.

For what is there that we will not hope for?

CHAPTER XVII

The High Initiation

PROMPTLY at noon the following day I presented myself before the Committee on Selective Assignments. The offices, which I found without difficulty, were located on the lower floor of an imposing blue-tinted granite edifice; and the Committee itself occupied a hall reminding me vaguely of a court-room, except that its ornamental columns and busts and statues were unparalleled in any court-room I had ever seen. Before a long marble railing sat about fifteen men and women, some old but several conspicuously young. All were perched on cushioned marble seats before little marble pedestals or writing stands, and to their rear were cases lined with rows of parchment-bound volumes that lent the place a scholarly dignity. In front of them, across the railing, were half a dozen tiers of blue stone benches; and on each of the benches stood a huge pile of books, as though the spectators were expected to make use of their time during any delay in the proceedings.

But I was not admitted at once into this great hall. First I was escorted into a small anteroom, where three Atlanteans—two youths of about twenty, and a girl of the same age—were seated studiously reading. From a little parchment document which each carried, I felt sure that they were here on a mission similar to my own; but so preoccupied did they seem, that I had no opportunity to question them. For a moment I merely stared at them impatiently; then, turning to inspect the room, I was delighted to observe a pile of little books on a reed stand in one corner.

AFTER a single curious glance, I began examining these volumes with hungry interest. Their very titles proved alluring, far more alluring than anything printed I had yet seen in Atlantis, with the exception of the lost Homeric masterpiece. Some were works of information dealing with subjects so varied as "Post-Submerging Mural Art," "The Rise of Government by Selection," "The Stimulation of Plant Life by Artificial Sunlight," "History of the Abolition of Crime," or "History of the Decline of the Upper World"; others were essays on such rare topics as "The Cultivation of Genius," "Is Altruism One of the Human Instincts?" and "How Atlantis Found the World by Losing It"; still others were works of literature, and, though I had no time to observe them carefully, I saw that they included an epic poem on "Agripides," a volume of lyrics by some unknown writer of two thousand years ago as well as selections from a dozen lyricists of the present, a poetic drama evidently designed for performance at the annual celebration of the Submergence, several novels and a collection of stories, and a romance of the far future entitled "Super-Art."

But what particularly engaged my attention was a genial little satire known as "The Prisoner." This story, which was written in a crisp and simple style that I found delightful, recounted how an Atlantean of a thousand years before had been sentenced, as the penalty for his sins, to pass his remaining years in the upper world. Having been sent above seas in a little water-tight craft propelled by intra-atomic engines, he had set about to seek his fortune in his new surroundings; and, finding that the way to win distinction was to accumulate much gold, he applied his superior Atlantean wits so well that in a short while he became fabulously wealthy. But, after at-

taining what was reputed to be success, he discovered that his wealth meant nothing to him; he was hungry for the art and the beauty of Atlantis, without which the world seemed barbarous and empty. Even though he could have purchased any treasure or luxury on earth, he took to morbid repining; he brooded and brooded until he went completely out of his wits, which were finally restored to him when the Atlanteans took pity and decided to let him return. And so the poor man went back to his native land, having first forfeited his riches; and this was the last case of insanity ever known among the Atlanteans.

I had just completed this little story when I was roused to reality by hearing a strange voice sonorously pronouncing my name. Looking up, I saw a lavender-gowned man motioning me toward the main Committee Room; and I observed with surprise that the youths and the girl had disappeared while I was absorbed in my book.

I found the central hall empty except for the fifteen men and women sedately seated behind the railing; but at sight of these grave individuals I felt my misgivings returning, and wished that I could have been anywhere else in the universe.

"This is Anson Harkness, is it not?" rang forth the high-pitched and yet not unpleasant voice of an aged man whose proximity to the railing indicated that he was the head of the Committee. And after I had assured him that I was the person designated, the Head Member continued, earnestly and yet not so menacingly as I had expected, "Be seated, Anson Harkness. It is an important matter that brings you here. And I believe that, in your case, more than the usual amount of time and thought will be necessary before we can reach a decision."

The Head Member paused, cleared his throat, and slowly proceeded, "I trust that you will co-operate with us to the best of your ability, for only so can we expect satisfactory results. Just as the average man is betrothed but once in his life, so he appears but once before this Committee; and since, as in the case of a betrothal, much may depend upon the proper choice—"

"I beg your pardon, sir," I interrupted, unable to endure these long-winded sentences that only added to my confusion, "would you mind telling me why I am here? As yet I haven't the faintest idea."

The Head Member peered at me in mild surprise; his fourteen associates darted inquiring looks at one another.

"Why, yes, that is a proper question," he resumed, blandly. "I had forgotten: you are a foreigner, and are unacquainted with our ways. You will understand, of course that foreigners were so totally unknown before your coming that the necessity for explanation had not occurred to me. However, the whole matter can be made clear in a few words. You are summoned for what is known as the High Initiation—in other words, this should be the happiest day of your life, since you are now regarded as having reached maturity and so may set forth upon your career of service to the State."

HAVING been a voter in the United States for the past eleven years, I was not flattered to be told that I had reached maturity. None the less, I held my tongue, and listened patiently as the Head Member continued.

"The government tutor who has been instructing you," he pursued, "has reported that you have at least an elementary knowledge of our language and customs, and suggests that you be assigned at once to

service. Acting upon his recommendation, we intend to promote you to duties that accord as nearly as possible with your desires and capabilities. But first we must say a word as to the methods in vogue in our land. Ever since the great social revolution which occurred in the second century after the submergence and which for a time threatened to engulf us in chaos, we have employed what is known as the Beehive System of labor—which means that every citizen is required to perform a certain minimum amount of work for the State in order to accomplish those tasks indispensable for our continued existence. Fortunately, the utilization of intra-atomic energy and the elimination of waste and of duplication of effort have reduced the essential work to one-tenth of that thought necessary before the Submergence; and the average citizen now labors not more than an hour and a half or two hours a day. There have, indeed, been occasional men and women so enamored of their employment as to insist on working four or five hours, but such excessive application is not encouraged, for it is believed to overcast the mind and blunt the esthetic sensibilities."

"Then for heaven's sake," I burst forth, thinking this country to be wholly without "push" and energy, "what do people here do with their time? If they don't work, they must be simply bored to death!"

The Head Member regarded me with a tolerant smile, as one might regard a lunatic who makes some harmless remark.

"That is where you misunderstand the meaning of the word work," he explained, with something of the manner of a schoolmaster to a backward pupil. "Our people do work, and work diligently indeed, and sometimes work many hours a day—but not on those barren practical duties to which they are assigned, and which are necessary merely in order that the community may exist. As soon as any man or woman has passed the period of elementary instruction and is assigned to service by this Committee, he finds himself in possession of many leisure hours a day—and those hours of leisure constitute the important part of his life, and it is on their account that he is to be congratulated on reaching maturity. For now he may have the opportunity both for self-expression and for the better sort of service to the State; he may devote himself to study, research or creation in any field that suits his fancy (there is absolutely no restriction in this regard, although every one is expected to apply himself to some definite pursuit). One, for example, may elect to paint landscapes; a second to conduct some elaborate philosophic inquiry; a third to write poetry; a fourth to investigate the ways of marine animals; a fifth to be an actor, or a musical virtuoso, or the author of historical essays, or a critic of architecture, or a designer of fine tapestries."

"But what if one finds nothing at all that he can do?" I inquired, wondering how on earth I could fit myself into this superior scheme of things.

"Oh, but one must find something!" declared the Head Member, while his colleagues eyed one another with looks implying that I was really to naive for belief. "It would be a disgrace to do nothing at all except one's practical duties. It would mean that one had been a failure in life; that one's existence had added nothing to the world. Why, there isn't more than one such a case a year—and then it's usually found that the poor sufferer has been the victim of some accident, which blunted his mental faculties."

The Head Member paused; and while I had horrific visions of myself as the first failure in a year, one of the members just to the rear of the Head Member

leaned over and whispered something into his ear. Just what he said I could not catch, but the evident effect was to hasten proceedings, for the chief official promptly turned to me, and, with unwonted directness, continued, "Well, now that we have made all the necessary explanations, let us get down to the actual assignment. Just what sort of work do you think you would prefer, young man?"

Having no reason to believe that I would prefer any work at all, I did nothing but gape blankly at the speaker.

"I am surprised at your hesitancy," that sedate individual at length continued, blandly. "There is so much for you to do that I should think you would simply overwhelm us with suggestions."

BUT I fear that I continued to do nothing but look blank. "You will pardon me," I pleaded, when the suspense had become embarrassing, "if I leave the suggestions to you. I really know so little about Atlantis that I couldn't possibly choose wisely."

"True, you do know little about Atlantis," coincided the Head Member, with a smile. "But there is something about which you undoubtedly know a great deal, and about which we Atlanteans know nothing at all."

"You mean—my own country?" I demanded, while all the members of the Committee leaned forward with interested glances.

"Of course—your own country, and the upper world in general," the Head Member nodded, approvingly. "You must remember, our latest news of your world was received some three thousand years ago. Even for a leisurely people like us, that is a long while. You cannot imagine how curious we are as to all that has happened since."

"And that's what you want me to tell you?"

"Naturally. We know, to be sure, that no one man could begin to tell us everything, but at least we'd like to learn the general outline of events. And so we are thinking of appointing you Official Historian of the Upper World."

"Official Historian of the Upper World!" I repeated, like one in a daze.

"Yes. Why not? Judging from the fact that you've made quicker progress in our language than any of your companions, we think you would perhaps be better qualified for the office."

"But I haven't specialized in history—" I began.

"We're more interested in general movements than in particular incidents," explained the Head Member. "The sort of knowledge that any educated man might give us, is what we want."

"You certainly are not unacquainted with the present civilization up above, are you?"

"No, not altogether," I was forced to acknowledge.

"And you've been taught a reasonable amount about the past, have you not?"

"I've taken a number of history courses at college, if that's what you mean."

"Excellent! Excellent!" The Head Member beamed upon me ingratiatingly. "Then the rest should be a mere matter of study and application. You don't object to the appointment, do you?"

I confessed that I did not object.

Whereupon, turning to his associates, he inquired, "Do you all approve of the appointment of Anson Harkness as Official Historian of the Upper World?"

Since there was no dissent among the Committee members, my life-work was apparently settled.

"But just what do you expect me to do?" I queried, somewhat doubtfully, after my appointment had been confirmed.

"You are to write a history of the upper world, of course," explained the Head Member, surprised that I should ask the obvious. "How you are to proceed will be for you to decide; but you must remember that this will be your assigned work, to which you are expected to devote not less than two hours a day. I might point out, moreover, that yours is one of those rare cases where the assigned work is so important that you might do well to combine it with your optional work, and so dedicate your time exclusively to your duties as historian."

"Perhaps that would be the best way," I agreed, for it struck me that the task before me would require all my energies.

But at that juncture an important question occurred to me. I did not wish to seem too commercial; but it was evident that the examiners had overlooked something essential. "Now as to the practical returns," I ventured, mildly. "I know, of course, that I cannot expect to be paid very much—"

"To be paid?" repeated four or five of the Committee members all at once, with looks of such sheer amazement that I knew that I had blundered.

"Oh, then perhaps I must show you some results first?" I suggested, perceiving no other alternative.

For two or three seconds there was silence—an ominous, puzzled silence which made me realize that I had given deep offense.

"Young man," the Head Member at length broke forth, severely, "I fear that you are under a grave misapprehension. But possibly you are not wholly to blame, for it may be that your own country still labors under those primitive social arrangements which we Atlanteans abolished three thousand years ago. Know, then, that there is no such thing as payment in our land. There is no money; there is no medium of exchange. You do your work, and in return receive all the necessities of life; your meals are brought to you by State employees, just as they have been brought to you thus far; you are also lodged by the State, clothed by the State, educated by the State; the State works of art are at your disposal, you are admitted freely to all State entertainments, and are even granted periodic vacations to break the monotony of existence. What more could any man desire?"

"No more, of course," I conceded, feeling utterly crushed.

"Very well, then," said the official, with an indulgent smile that made me feel ridiculous. "Now there is only one more matter to be decided. How would you like to set out on your travels the day after tomorrow?"

"What travels?" I gasped, wondering what on earth he could mean.

"Why, evidently you haven't heard about that, either!" remarked the Head Member, noting my surprise. "You see, every Atlantean, upon receiving his assignment and before taking up his duties, is expected to make a tour of the country, so as to acquaint himself with it at first hand. Otherwise, how could he expect to voice himself intelligently on national affairs?"

Having nothing to say in reply, I merely gaped and remained silent.

"Ordinarily, this journey requires about a month," my informer proceeded. "The trip is made entirely on foot, so that one may observe the country thoroughly. There is a party leaving in two days—perhaps you would like to join them."

"Very well," I assented. And, after being advised regarding a few details of the trip and then notified of my dismissal, I went away feeling more puzzled than

ever, for I could not believe that Atlantis could show me anything more marvelous than it had already shown.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Journey Commences

TWO days later I set out on what was to prove the most extraordinary excursion of my life.

Arriving early in the morning at the appointed meeting place—an open, flower-bordered "circle" or park near the western end of the town—I was greeted by a score of eager young men and women, who introduced themselves as my traveling companions. They were all in an excited, highly animated condition, chatting and jesting continually, moving about restlessly, gay with the gaiety of high expectations; and they all, without exception, were conspicuously and vividly youthful, for their ages must have varied between eighteen and twenty-one. At the same time, they resembled their fellow Atlanteans in that they looked utterly wholesome and unworldly, and had the grace and beauty of persons whose lives have been unstained and whose minds untarnished.

I was just wondering whether these attractive creatures were to be my sole companions, when I was surprised by the sight of four newcomers—two men and two women of somewhat maturer years than the others. At the moment of their arrival they were surrounded so enthusiastically by the members of the party that I had not a chance for a clear glimpse of them; but even a partial glimpse was enough to make me stop short with a gasp of delight—among their number I thought I saw the sparkling blue eyes of Aelios! At first I was not sure; but with fast-throbbing heart I pressed forward, and to my inexpressible joy found that I had not been mistaken.

"Aelios!" I cried, as soon as I could manage to draw her to one side. "Aelios—what are you doing here?"

She smiled her bewilderingly sweet smile, but did not choose to answer directly. "What are you doing here?" she countered.

"Why, you should know without asking," I reminded her. "Didn't I show you my summons from the Committee on Selective Assignments?"

"Yes, I remember," she murmured. "Only, I didn't know you would set out on your travels so soon. But I'm really very glad. Now you'll be a full-fledged citizen of Atlantis!"

"But are you going with us, Aelios? Are you going, too?" I asked, still unable to credit my good fortune.

"Yes, I am going." And, observing how quizzically I was regarding her, she continued, "You see, three or four tutors are assigned to each of the traveling parties, for we have made the journey before, and are able to explain the sights along the way."

"But how can you leave so suddenly?" I questioned, remembering Stranahan's daily lessons. "How about—how about the work you were doing here?"

"Oh, I am excused, of course, until my return. Some other tutor is substituted for me, and everything goes along smoothly enough with my students."

"Their loss is our good fortune," said I, quite truthfully; and Aelios acknowledged the compliment with a gracious bow, and then smilingly rejoined the other tutors.

A few minutes later we were under way. We crossed the Salty River on a long bridge overarched with a crystal arcade and lined with friezes representing mythological scenes; then on the northern



Some of the trees had branches symmetrically woven into the likenesses of great cobwebs, and from those cobwebs at regular intervals dangled clusters of grape-like fruits; other trees were cactus-like and leafless; and some of the shrubs and creepers bore pods resembling those of beans and peas, except that they were over a foot in length. The vast majority of this strange assemblage of plants seemed to be fruit-bearing. . . .

bank, we followed a little winding lane westward at the base of the marble palaces and towers. Before many minutes, we approached the borders of the city; and when at length we passed into the open country, my companions experienced a rare burst of high spirits. Some gave expression to their feelings by low, soft cries of joy; some capered, romped and laughed merrily along the way; some engaged in loud-pitched and enthusiastic discussions; but all looked carefree and happy indeed; and I could not help being infected with their gay mood. I experienced nothing of the constraint that might have been only natural, for my companions seemed to accept me frankly as one of them, and in consequence I felt hardly out of place. Before long I was chatting with several of the young men as volubly as though I had known them all their lives.

Of Aelos I caught no more than a glimpse on that first day. She seemed to be absorbed in her conversations with the other tutors; and an occasional smiling glance in my direction was all that she would vouchsafe me. But I was happy merely to know that she was near, and was convinced that succeeding days would offer opportunities to strengthen our friendship. And at the same time I was so well occupied that I had little leisure for thinking of anybody in particular.

To one who has never been underseas and gazed at the landscapes of that incredible world, it will be impossible to convey any idea of the enthusiasm and wonder I felt. Already I had beheld marvels in Atlantis, marvels sufficient to bewilder the most audacious imagination; but that which I now observed was so unique as momentarily to overshadow even my previous discoveries.

FOR the first hour after leaving the city we pursued a little path that ran almost in a straight line along the banks of the Salty River. Opposite us, across the stream, stretched the long, low contours of the colonnades and temples I had inspected soon after arriving in Atlantis; and at our feet the waters shot swiftly by, with gentle swishing and murmuring, a green-gray expanse several hundred yards across, but differing from all other rivers I had ever beheld in that it was of the same width at all points and flowed in a straight and orderly manner without any twists, turns or meanderings.

All this, of course, I had already observed; and my first surprises were not to come until at length the road bent abruptly northward away from the river and we entered what was for me a virgin territory. As we advanced, the vegetation became denser and more curious; tall reeds, bushes and trees began to cluster about us until I had the impression of being lost in a jungle. But it was a jungle such as no explorer has ever viewed in the wilds of Africa, New Guinea, or Brazil, for the plants were so fantastic that even the strange undersea vegetation I had already beheld seemed commonplace by comparison. Here, for the first time, the trees were of a vivid green, and a normal foliage was abundant; yet there was so much which looked abnormal that I could only stare and stare in amazement. Some of the trees had branches symmetrically woven into the likeness of great cobwebs, and from those cobwebs at regular intervals dangled clusters of grape-like fruits; other trees were cactus-like and leafless, with huge round protuberances at regular intervals along their spiny boles; still others were almost concealed amid thick meshes of vines, or were adorned with multicolored cup-shaped blossoms larger than a man's head, or dominated by scores of succulent-looking stalks like gigantic asparagus. Then

again some were little more than great rounded and compressed masses of leafage, reminding me of ten-foot cabbages; and some would have struck me as nothing more than ordinary mushrooms, had they not reached as high as my waist; and some of the shrubs and creepers bore pods resembling those of beans and peas, except that they were over a foot in length. But the most conspicuous fact about this strange assemblage of plants was that the vast majority seemed to be fruit-bearing; on all sides one could observe a multitude of green fruits of all sizes and shapes, as well as a profusion of the ripening and ripe product, some of it small as cherries and some large as water-melons, some pale green and some gaudy red, some lemon-hued and some a modest pink and some a deep purple, but all striking one by a contrast and a variety as pleasing to the eye as it was extraordinary.

As we entered this peculiar jungle-like region, I noted a marked change in the atmosphere. For the first time, I became aware that there could be such a thing as climate in Atlantis: the air was growing dank and overheated, and I had the impression of having entered the tropics. And simultaneously I observed an increase of light that for the moment dazzled me, and I felt as if a torrid sun were burning directly above. Yet the source of the added warmth and illumination was in no way a mystery: brilliant white lamps had been placed at intervals along the great roof-supporting tinted columns, glaring down upon the foliage like miniature suns, and combining with the large golden orbs to lend the scene a dream-like and unearthly beauty.

Before long I noted that the vegetation was interrupted every few hundred yards by a ditch from five to ten feet across and filled to the brim with sluggish brown water. Had not these trenches invariably been of even width and geometrical straightness, I might have mistaken them for rivulets; but their precise outlines would permit but one interpretation, and they brought me remembrances of the irrigation canals I had seen on the semi-arid plains of Arizona and California. It seemed, however, that they served more than a single purpose; for as we crossed a little arching bridge over one of the widest of these waterways, I saw a long, flat boat anchored just beneath my feet; and four or five men, clad in close-fitting gray instead of in the usual long-flowing tinted robes, were busy loading this barge with newly plucked clusters of blue and crimson and orange-colored fruit.

Even had there been no one to enlighten me concerning these queer jungles, I would now have understood their general nature. Still, they seemed to embody a multitude of mysteries, mysteries to be explained by no known laws of biology; and, accordingly, I listened eagerly when one of the tutors, finding himself besieged by an enthusiastic, questioning coterie, launched forth upon an explanatory discourse.

"From the earliest times, as you know," said he, speaking informally, and yet with something of the manner of a professor addressing his class, "We Atlanteans have been skilled in horticulture. To begin with, nature provided the stimulus, for the flora of an island such as Atlantis is apt to be unique, and that of our own country was particularly so. But long before the Submergence, we had outdone nature by developing a multitude of new plants; and since the Submergence our botanists have busied themselves incessantly with the study of artificial stimulation of vegetable life. It is well known how industriously they have experimented, trying the effect of new soils and environments, grafting the limbs of innumerable bushes and trees, cross-fertilizing and encouraging all

favorable chance growths or "sports"; and in these pursuits they have been aided by the altered environment of Atlantis, which seems favorable to rapid and sudden variation, and has given rise to innumerable varieties of plants unknown before.

"I do not need to tell you how essential all this has been for the maintenance of Atlantean life, for our land is limited in extent and much of it is unsuited for agriculture; only by the intensive and forced development of the rest can we hope to support our people. And so it has been necessary to evolve food-plants that would produce more prolifically than any known before; and at the same time we have had to develop a light which would be the chemical equivalent of sunlight, and so would stimulate the chlorophyll of the leaves, the original source of all organic matter. This, to be sure, was accomplished even before the Submergence; but since the Submergence there has been a constant improvement in the quality of the artificial sunlight; and in the eleventh century A. S., the great chemist, Sorandos, produced a light actually superior to sunlight. At least (for some reason that Sorandos himself never made sufficiently plain) it stimulates plant life to an extraordinarily rapid growth, even thought it has the compensating fault of inducing rapid decay. It is this light which you see shining down upon you now from the great stone columns."

THE speaker paused, and I thought the time opportune to put a question which had been puzzling me. "You tell us that you have need for intensive crop production," said I, "and yet have I not heard that you can produce food chemically?"

"Yes, indeed," admitted the tutor, with a shrug. "The same light that develops the chlorophyll in plants may be employed for the synthetic manufacture of starch and sugar out of charcoal and distilled water. But that is an old fashioned method, and not very successful on the whole, for we have found that this artificial food lacks some element essential for good health."

"Even so, why rely wholly upon plant life?" I inquired, curious to know why my diet in Atlantis had been strictly vegetarian. "Do you never—do you never eat meat?"

"Eat meat?" The tutor's tone was one of astonishment; and I observed half a dozen pairs of eyes staring at me in shocked surprise.

For a moment I felt like one who has urged cannibalism or some other barbarous rite. And my discomfort was scarcely relieved when my informant sternly declared, "There has been no meat consumed in Atlantis since the Submergence; flesh-eating has been discarded along with the other uncivilized practices of the ancients. How could we feel ourselves to be superior to the beasts and yet live at the cost of blood?"

"But are there no animals at all in Atlantis?" I found the courage to inquire.

"Oh, yes, though naturally we couldn't take care of many after the Submergence." And my companion paused, and pointed to a little red-breasted feathered thing perched amid the dense green of the foliage. "There are birds of course—we could not dispense with them. Then there are a few insects, such as the butterflies—and the bees, which give us honey and are necessary for plant pollenization—though all harmful insects were long ago destroyed. Also, there are squirrels and chipmunks and other small creatures; and in the Salty River and the canals there are numerous fish. And in some places along the banks

of the Salty River there are hundreds of bullfrogs." "Bullfrogs!" I exclaimed. "Bullfrogs!" And suddenly I understood the meaning of those strange noises which had so terrified my shipmates and myself during our first night in Atlantis!

CHAPTER XIX

The Glass City

FOR five or six hours we proceeded through the fruit-bearing jungles, which seemed limitless in extent and yet constantly displayed new and unexpected features. But the journey was by no means arduous, for twice we paused for rest and refreshments at little open-air inns that fronted the roads; at all times our pace was unhurried. And most of the party seemed still fresh and energetic when, toward the middle of the afternoon, we emerged suddenly from the thickets and saw a group of fairy-like towers gleaming straight ahead.

"That is the city of Thalos," I heard one of the tutors explaining. "It is there that we stay for the night."

As we approached, I directed my eyes eagerly upon Thalos, which even at a distance appeared strikingly different from Archeon. Indeed, it appeared strikingly different from any city I had ever seen, for no streets or thoroughfares of any kind were visible, and, as we drew near, the various buildings seemed to merge in a long unbroken line dominated by turrets, domes and spires spaced at geometrical intervals; and all those domes and spires flashed and sparkled with a multicolored light, which changed in hue and intensity with every step we took and was elusive and yet vivid as the glittering of innumerable gems.

So awe-stricken was I that I scarcely thought of questioning my companion, but hastened toward this alluring city. And the nearer I approached the more dazzled I was. By degrees I came to realize that a high wall surrounded the town; but this wall brought no reminders of the fortified bulwarks of ancient cities, for its outlines were graceful and pleasing, its color an agreeable dark blue, and its evident purpose ornamental. And when I had come within a few hundred yards of the city, I observed that its blueness was translucent, indicating that the building material was glass!—and, judging from the peculiar glistening and glinting of the towers projecting above the wall, I wondered whether stained glass were not the substance of the entire town!

This, in fact, I discovered to be so. Having passed through the wall by means of a little arched gateway invisible at a distance, I found myself in what might have been a city out of the Arabian Nights. I cannot say with certainty whether I beheld a single building or a hundred, or whether I stood in an open court or in a street; for before me spread a wide expanse of glass masonry, of arches and covered galleries, of steeples and cupolas and winding balconies; and all this masonry seemed to be joined in a more or less unified whole. There may have been individual edifices, but there was no edifice not connected with its neighbors by arching walls or overhead passageways; there may have been streets winding through this wilderness of glass, but it struck me that there were only open spaces alternating with twining glass-roofed corridors. Yet, however bizarre the total impression, (and bizarre it was beyond all imagining), there was a certain unity that prevented the city from appearing grotesque; and, its various segments, in their garments of lavender or pale blue or turquoise or

vivid ruby, fitted together as perfectly as the parts of an intricate and beautiful mosaic.

We had barely entered the city when half a dozen natives emerged from unseen corridors and greeted us. Like the members of our own party, they were dressed in exquisite light-tinted gowns; and, like all the Atlantians, they were well built, prepossessing of appearance and handsome; and there was a perfect natural courtesy in their manner when they assured us how welcome we were and bade us accompany them to our lodgings.

Still speechless with wonder, I followed my companions through long crystal galleries, around the base of jewel-like glimmering towers, and across flowered parks where iridescent fountains splashed and bubbled. "This is typical of the latest in architecture," I heard one of the men saying, as he pointed up at the curving, interlinking stained glass porticoes and domes. "Thalos in its present form is not more than five centuries old, and is exclusively a development of Post-Submergence art."

Almost before these words were out of the speaker's mouth, we were led up a long flight of stairs and through an elliptical doorway into a chamber which, to my surprise, was walled and roofed not with glass, but with marble. Here we were treated to a sumptuous repast, consisting of a sort of vegetable steak, native cakes and bread, honey and fruit, which already lay spread for us on half a dozen little tables. After we had dined, we were each shown to a room on the roof, which was equipped with all articles that necessity or convenience could demand, and where, if we wished, we might rest from the day's somewhat strenuous exertions.

Some of our party may possibly have availed themselves of this opportunity; but for my own part, I was so excited merely at being in Thales, that a rest was out of the question.

AS soon as I had washed myself clean of the dust of the journey, I made my way down from my roof-apartment and out of the building. As I stepped toward the outer door, I was rejoiced to see a familiar blue-clad figure preceding me down the stairs. "Aelios!" I cried; and when she turned to see what was the matter, I joined her with the breathless suggestion that we take a little stroll together. And—quite unexpectedly—she obliged me by agreeing.

"Luckily, I've been here before, and so know my way about," she said, as we started. "If you went alone, you might get lost."

"I wouldn't mind—in such a charming place," I declared, with a smile.

And then, as a means of making conversation, I remarked, "The people here are exceedingly hospitable, aren't they?"

"Hospitable?" she echoed, as if not understanding. "What makes you think that?"

Surprised, I pointed out the self-evident fact that they had lodged and feasted us so splendidly.

"Oh, it is not they that have lodged and feasted us!" she corrected. "It is the State!"

It was now my turn to look blank, and hers to explain.

"Our complete itinerary has been arranged in advance," she continued, "and all our needs will be provided for by the State, just as the State provides for us when we're at home. Obviously, that's the only possible way."

"Then is there no such thing as private property in Atlantis?" I inquired.

"Private property?" She looked puzzled, as though

trying to assimilate an alien point of view. "What would be the use of private property?"

Then, seeing the dull stare with which I replied, she proceeded, "Of course, I remember that there used to be private property in the old days, before the Submergence. But that has all been abolished long ago."

"Is it possible?" I exclaimed, thinking this the most incredible statement I had yet heard.

"Well, not quite all abolished," she amended, thoughtfully. "Our clothes and books and personal ornaments are still private property, of course."

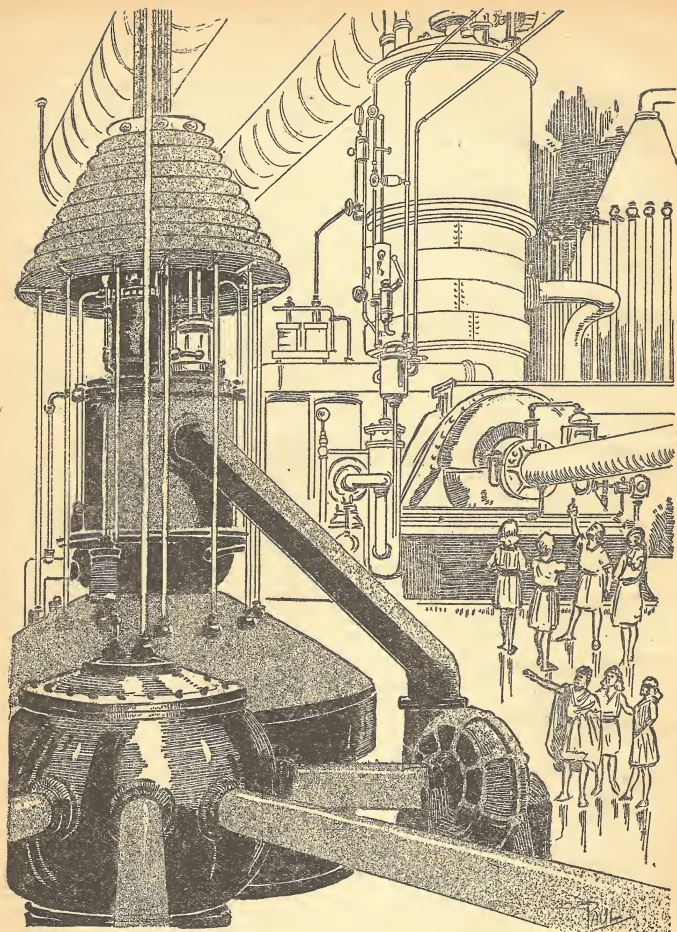
"But does the State supply one with everything else?"

"Yes, with everything, including clothes. You'll see for yourself when you return from this trip and set out as a citizen."

Thereupon she told me a few more facts about the State control of property, and how things such as inheritance and taxation were unknown. Then gradually the conversation shifted to less impersonal and more alluring subjects. She asked me about the world I had come from, and whether it had any architectural marvels rivaling those of Thalos; and I replied that it had not, though the skyscrapers of New York were considered wondrous enough. I was reluctant to talk about my own world, however; I did not wish to be disturbed by remembrances; I desired only to be walking with Aelios as I was walking now, and to hear her speak, and to be permitted to look into those bright and glamorous blue eyes of hers. And so I listened like one in a trance as she told me of her life, and how she had been the eldest child of two celebrated artists and had never lacked anything she really wanted, and how from her earliest years she had loved music and the dance, but particularly the dance, and had followed her childhood inclinations in her chosen work for the State, though in her prescribed work she was a tutor. All this and much more Aelios told me about herself, while I heard her with adoration that must have been all too apparent in my fascinated gaze. But she seemed without self-consciousness and without realization of the tender sentiments welling up within me; and she rambled eagerly on and on, speaking with animation and vivacity, as one speaks to an old and amiable companion.

We must have strolled through the rambling thoroughfares for an hour, when we seated ourselves on a cushioned marble bench at one corner of a wide court. "If we stay here until dark," suggested Aelios, "you will witness one of the most curious exhibitions that you have ever seen."

It seemed only a few minutes later when, without warning, the golden orbs above us flickered, grew dim, and flashed into blackness. Then, while I was wondering whether we were to be left in total gloom, other lights gleamed from the city's unseen pinnacles; and their rays darted in long streamers against a blank glass wall directly across from us, illuminating it with fantastic and unbelievable designs. Unlike the searchlights that had amazed me at the Pageant of the Good Destruction, these lights were not without apparent purpose; they shed definite patterns, I might almost say pictures, upon the broad glass screen. First one could make out the form of a man, life-sized and with pale-colored robes, moving in agile cinematograph fashion; then a woman or a child would advance across the screen to meet him; then the two would engage in various significant motions or gesticulations, to be joined perhaps by others; and in the swaying and blending of the lights, the weird mingling and intermingling of a myriad shades and colors, the back-



And along each side of the broad passageway, rising almost to meet the ceiling, was a series of what I took to be gigantic boilers. All of these were connected with innumerable wires and with pipes thicker than a man's body, while at the further end of the gallery the tubes were interwoven in intricate loops, coils and convolutions like the exposed entrails of a Titan.

ground of shadows and the foreground of lithe and active figures, I realized that I was witnessing the representation of scenes from Atlantean life!

What those scenes were I cannot recall. But I have the impression that they aimed to present life symbolically rather than literally; that beauty was their purpose rather than accuracy, and that a pleasing harmony of color, tone and proportion was deemed more important than a stringent realism. I fear that I was not sufficiently advanced in the native art to appreciate them, for they left little more effect upon my mind than an exhibition of mere technique with the violin or piano would leave upon one untrained in music.

But, at the time, the spectacle certainly did have its influence. Although vaguely aware that the seats about me were being silently occupied, I could scarcely give a thought to my surroundings; and under the enchantment of the shifting and pictorial lights, I felt as if Aellos and I were alone together; and I pressed close to her, until not a fraction of an inch divided us and it seemed that we breathed not as two persons but as one. Very cautiously, as though it were a clandestine and forbidden act, I reached out my hand till it touched hers and the palm closed softly over her fingers. She did not return the pressure and yet did not withdraw her hands, nor even seem to notice what I was doing; and, in my confusion, I scarcely knew whether to feel encouraged or repulsed.

Then, by that wavering and uncertain light, I caught a glimpse of her eyes. They were bright and shining—and did they merely reflect her joy at the colored display? Not a word was spoken between us, nor was I anxious that a word be spoken; I had sudden visions of a tomorrow fairer than I would once have dared to hope for.

CHAPTER XX

Farm and Factory

EARLY the following morning we were again under way. Leaving Thalos through a little arched gateway under the western wall, we trudged for several hours through flat green countryside. Here and there, amid breaks in the vegetation, we observed edifices which my companions described as "farmhouses," but which, with their statue-lined walls and marble columns, seemed to me to be little less than palaces. These remarkable dwellings, of which there must have been four or five to every square mile, were conspicuous from a distance, for there were no obscuring trees, and the landscape was dominated by a hardy reed that grew shoulder-high in impenetrable clusters.

Except for the size of this plant, I might have fancied it to be a variety of wheat. Not only were its leaves long and grass-like, but it bore a rich crop of some grain that closely resembled wheat, although each of the seed-clusters were large as ears of Indian corn. That it was cultivated for food purposes was obvious, for brilliant white lamps were beaming from the tinted columns as in the fruit-jungles, and at regular intervals we passed irrigation ditches, and now and then caught glimpses of gray-clad men at work amid the green thickets.

But while this scenery was fairly interesting, it was on the whole the most monotonous I had yet viewed in Atlantis. Hence I was relieved when the landscape showed a sudden change, and the cultivated plains gave way to a series of long, low, grass-covered hills. From the beginning, I noticed something pe-

culiar about these eminences, for their contours were rounded with almost geometrical evenness; while beyond the furthest heights, a clear, rapid stream flowed out, of the ground as if forced up from nowhere, and, after meandering to the edge of the reed-covered plain, divided into half a dozen diverging irrigation canals. But all this was less surprising than what I next observed; for as I stood staring at the stream in wonder, a huge rock at the base of the nearest hill thrust itself outward, and a man emerged as if from the center of the earth!

Startled, I turned to my companions for an explanation—but not a murmur issued from them, and their faces showed none of that amazement I might have expected. "Here is where we enter," declared one of the tutors, in a matter-of-fact tones; and followed by the rest of the party, he plunged through the aperture made by the dislodged boulder.

Like one in a dream—or rather like one in a nightmare—I trailed with the others into that hole on the hillside. As I approached the entrance, I found that what I had taken to be a rock was not a rock at all, but merely a cleverly disguised bit of metal and upon reaching the doorway, I was amazed to find, instead of the tunnel-like corridor I had expected, a spacious and wide-vaulting hall.

With the exception of the Sunken World itself it was the largest enclosure I had ever entered; indeed, it occupied the entire interior of the hill. Along the full length of a half-mile gallery the white-lanterned ceiling arched to a height of two hundred feet; and on each side of a broad passageway, rising almost to meet the ceiling, was a series of what I took to be gigantic boilers. All of these were connected with innumerable wires and with pipes thicker than a man's body, while at the further end of the gallery the tubes were interwoven in intricate loops, coils and convolutions like the exposed entrails of a Titan.

As I stepped through the doorway, a warm breeze swept my face, bearing to my nostrils the odor of oil, and at the same time bringing me reminders of the furnace-dry air of steam-heated apartments. "What place is this?" I could not forbear to ask; but almost instantly I was sorry that I had spoken, for four or five pairs of eyes were turned upon me in surprise.

"This is a distillery, of course," answered one of my young companions.

"A distillery?" I echoed, scarcely less astonished at his words than at the extraordinary appearance of the place. And although the Atlanteans had seemed to me to be a sober people, I had visions of the manufacture of intoxicants on a scale inconceivable to the most bibulous of my own countrymen.

"Yes, this is where we prepare our distilled water," continued my friend, surprised at my surprise.

FOR a moment I merely stared at him without comprehension. "But why so much distilled water?" was all that I could gasp.

"That's easily explained," said the young man, with a smile. "The water piped from our deep wells, which serves us for drinking purposes, couldn't begin to take care of our irrigation problems—and without irrigation Atlantis would be a desert. The Salty River, of course, contains enough for all our needs; but it is ocean water, and the brine would kill all land vegetation. And so the only possibility was to distill the water. This was arranged for long ago by Agripides, when he built this distillery and eleven others, which together keep the irrigation system of Atlantis supplied, and incidentally provide us with all the salt required for domestic and chemical purposes."

"That may be all very well," I remarked, "but the amount of heat necessary to evaporate so much water must be tremendous . . ."

"That is no problem at all," my companion assured me. "By means of intra-atomic energy, we could generate power enough to distill the entire ocean."

I felt certain that this statement was an exaggeration, but before I had had time for comment, my attention was suddenly diverted. All of our party had paused before a circular slit in the floor; and a brown-clad workman, stepping forth from amid the boilers, applied a key to a little hole near the edge of the slit, and removed a steel disk perhaps five feet in diameter.

Instantly we were bathed in a brilliant copper light, so dazzling that at first I had to turn abruptly away. Then as my startled eyes gradually accustomed themselves to the vivid illumination, I peered through a glass partition far down into what remotely reminded me of a furnace, except that no flames were visible, but from the vague fire-bright background great sheets and rods of a shining red or a blinding brassy yellow stared at me steadily with unbearable uncan-
descence.

"Those are the intra-atomic generators," explained the workmen. "They are constantly liberating energy which is transformed into electrical power by means of giant induction coils; and it is this electricity which is wired to the boiler-room below and heats the water from the Salty River."

"But how terrible to work down there!" it occurred to me to comment. "How can any man—"

"It is not necessary to work down there," I was promptly informed. "The generators continue operating automatically so long as they are supplied with fuel."

"What fuel do you use?" I inquired.

The reply was not at all what I had expected. "Any of the heavier metals will do," stated the workman. "One of the best of the cheaper fuels is gold, for its high atomic weight makes possible extensive dissociation. Sometimes, however, we use silver, platinum, or lead—although the latter is ordinarily regarded as too valuable for such purposes. A supply of lead will run the generator for twenty-seven years, one of silver for thirty-three, and one of gold for forty-five. When new fuel is required, we simply shoot it in through the tube over there." And the speaker pointed to a tube of about the thickness of a man's wrist, which projected several feet above the floor between two of the boilers.

I thought that I had now seen enough of the distillery, and was not disappointed when my companions made ready to leave. But there was one problem which still troubled me: why did the building look so much like a holl from without, and why had such evident pains been taken to conceal its existence?

To these questions I found a speedy answer: "If this edifice had been erected in the days before Agripides," declared one of my young friends, "it would have been nothing more than an ugly mass of steel and stone. But Agripides, seeking a way to beautify the structure and hide its unavoidable defects, hit upon the plan of covering it with a coating of earth and sowing the earth with grass, so as to give the appearance of a green hill. All our factories, you will find, have in some such way been concealed or made beautiful."

This, indeed, I discovered to be the case. We had now reached the industrial center of Atlantis; and all the rest of that day we were busy inspecting manufacturing plants of sundry kinds and sizes. But no-

where was the air clouded with that smoke and dust which I had come to associate with industrial districts in my own land; nowhere was there a dingy or soot-blackened building, nowhere were my ears assailed by the shrieking or droning of whistles, or by the hammering, pounding, screeching, whirring or grating of machines. Instead, we passed through a region that might have been recommended to sufferers from nervous ailments. In the midst of pleasant, grassy lands an occasional tree-bordered building arose with glittering steeples or stainless marble facade or august columns of granite; and within each building, which one might have mistaken for a mansion or a temple, electrically driven wheels and levers would be operating noiselessly, preparing the food of the Atlanteans or weaving their clothes from the fibre of a flax-like plant, manufacturing farm-implements or fertilizers or scientific articles or household wares; and in each of these factories a few workers (never more than a score) would be calmly and often smilingly tending the machines, occupying thus their two or three hours of assigned daily service for the State.

THE institution that interested me most was the building where chemists were at work renewing the air supply of Atlantis—or, rather, the oxygen supply. Here, in a long hall dominated by great vats connected by pipes and wires reminding me vaguely of the distillery, a continual stream of water was being disintegrated by a process of electrolysis, the hydrogen being diverted to enter into various chemical compounds with carbon, nitrogen and other elements, the oxygen being released into the atmosphere to replace that consumed by respiration and combustion. By means of the air-gauge, a finely adjusted apparatus whose index was a flame that varied in intensity with the amount of oxygen, chemists were able to determine how much of this vital gas was required at any specific time; but some oxygen had to be provided continually, for, large as Atlantis was, it was not so great that nature could preserve a balance and replace the oxygen that was consumed by that freed in the organic processes of plant life.

But if the Atlantean industries were arranged with a regard for the welfare and esthetic sensibilities of the people as a whole, scarcely less pains had been taken to insure the health and convenience of the workers. I will not speak of the safety devices, which had been so perfected that accidents were virtually unknown; I will not dwell upon the precautions to vary the monotony even of the two or three-hour working day; to make possible individual initiative, to guard against fatigue and excessive strain, or to render the surroundings pleasant to the eye and mind. But what I must mention, because it impressed me as unique, is the fact that the workers were housed in dwellings not less imposing than the most stately city homes. The road took us through half a dozen villages reserved for the factory workers; and each of these seemed to be in itself a work of art, with many-columned residences, arches and marble portals and connecting colonnades, flowered parks and statuary and fountains, all co-ordinated in a tasteful and elegant design.

CHAPTER XXI

The Wall and the Wind-makers

THAT evening we were lodged in the city of Arvon, a moderately large town which differed strikingly from anything we had yet seen. Its

scattered houses were huddled amid vegetation so thick that from a distance it resembled a forest; and even at close range one could not lose sight of its sylvan aspect, since all the buildings were vine-covered and painted a green and brown that harmonized ideally with the woodland colors.

But I must not devote too much space to the strange appearance of this town—still stranger sights were to greet me on the following day. For then I was to reach a turning-point in my journey, and to penetrate some of the salient mysteries of Atlantis.

Even though I did not know what interesting discoveries were before me, I had a hint of something unusual very early in the morning. We had hardly left Arvon when I observed that the golden-lighted dome seemed lower and nearer than usual, and curved gradually down to westward until it appeared to merge with the ground.

"There's where the glass wall begins," said one of the tutors, pointing; and I looked eagerly, hopeful that we would soon reach the wall itself.

A little further on, the road curved abruptly southward, and for several miles we merely paralleled the wall. Then, to my joy, a familiar gurgling met my ears—we were back again near the Salty River. Straight across the stream we passed on an arching bridge dominated by a crystalline pale-blue colonnade; and, on the further side, we again turned westward, and followed the river directly toward the green glass wall.

As we advanced, I noticed that the waters were becoming white and foamy, with great briny patches as if a passing steamer had churned up the waves. Gradually these frothy expanses grew wilder and more conspicuous, until the entire river was a seething, effervescent mass; and troubled waves sprang to life, with turbulence that increased as we moved upstream, until the bubbling white was mingled with the green and gray of leaping surges, and the waters were agitated as if by a storm-wind. Yet only the faintest breeze was blowing, and I could not understand the source of the strange commotion.

At the same time, a disquieting sound came to my ears—the continuous and droning sound of thunder, dull and muffled but gradually growing louder in spite of the clamoring and roaring of the waves. So deep-toned and voluminous was it that it reminded me of a din I never expected to hear again—the booming of the ocean along resisting shores.

All of our party moved without a word now, moved rapidly and with faces strained westward, as if eager for some rare and long-awaited event. In their very speechlessness there was a contagious tension; and, responsive to their mood, I too was expectant, though I could not imagine what there was to be anticipated.

But I did not have long to wait. "Look! There it is!" exclaimed one of the party, suddenly. And he paused and pointed straight ahead; and all his companions paused and pointed straight ahead, joining in his awed cries of "Look! There it is!"

Of course, I strained my eyes quite as earnestly as any of them. But at first I saw nothing to impress me. All that was visible was a broad sheet of white looming just above the river for almost its full width, as though there were a falls a mile or two upstream. And, in my ignorance, I accepted this as the explanation.

But I was speedily to discover my error. Suddenly the path bent away from the river at an acute angle; and as we followed our new course the distant thundering grew louder—while a cold wind began to sweep over us and the supposed waterfall took on unexpected

dimensions. By degrees it lengthened until it seemed a long jet of water shot horizontally out of some colossal hose. Intensely white, with the whiteness of foam and edges blurred with spray, it went hurtling with the impetuosity and swiftness of an arrow from the nozzle of a gigantic pipe, plunging outward hundreds of yards in a graceful parabola and giving rise to the Salty River.

Almost as remarkable as this torrent of water was the tube from which it was discharged. This great pipe, which may have been of steel alloy, was well over a mile long, and was a hundred yards across at the opening; but it narrowed gradually as it crept westward along the ground and disappeared where the green horizon met the earth.

Needless to say, I did not have to inquire as to the meaning. Only one explanation was conceivable: the metallic tube was the valve through which the X-111 had found entrance to Atlantis, the valve that admitted the ocean water and kept the Salty River supplied. The aperture at the ocean end was doubtless not very wide (I was later told that it was but twenty-five feet across); but such was the pressure at these depths that the waters burst through with the force and swiftness and tremendous volume I had observed, and had to be diverted through a long and gradually widening tube before their torrents could be controlled and safely emptied into the river channel.

As we approached the glass wall, the hoarse and resonant roaring was continuously in our ears, thudding and crashing with echoes that reverberated like the combined monody of a hundred Niegas. But, forgetful of the tumult, I kept my eyes fastened straight ahead, where the great green dome sloped down to meet the ground in a curve modelled on that of the actual heavens. Except for the dark weird coloration, I might have fancied that I was staring toward an actual horizon on earth; and so close was the resemblance that the illusion persisted until I was almost within a stone's throw of the barrier. Only then could I persuade myself that I actually beheld a solid mass; and, even so, the curvature was so graceful and so elusive that I could not feel that a mere wall stretched before me; but, rather, I had the sense that it was some ultimate boundary, the dividing line between reality and infinite nothingness.

This impression was confirmed by the fact that the wall at close range looked opaque. Olive-green and of impenetrable thickness it seemed impervious to the rays of light; though, remembering my experiences on the X-111, I knew that it was really transparent.

All the members of our party approached the wall almost breathlessly, then held out their hands and touched it in silence—a procedure which may have had some ceremonial importance, or may have been akin to the actions of persons who, seeing the ocean for the first time, gravely dip their hands in the salt water. At any rate, I lost no time in following their example, and found that the surface of the wall was just as I had expected—smooth and polished, and of a substance that would have been apparent to a blind man.

After the twenty students had duly inspected the wall, one of the tutors lifted his voice so as to be heard by the entire party.

"My friends," said he, "we have now reached the border-land between Atlantis and the outside world. A rim of glass fifty feet thick divides us from the ocean; and that glass, as you know, is composed of dozens of layers, one above the other, several of them strengthened with interwoven strands of fine wire, and

all composed of a special pressure-resisting glass devised at the orders of Agripides. You understand, of course, that the wall does not end where you see it, but penetrates five hundred feet underground, lest the ocean overwhelm us from beneath; you also understand that the glass is latted with steel, which holds it together in a sort of latticed framework, with girders, beams and stanchions at measured intervals like the metallic skeleton of a great building.

"The erection of the wall represents the supreme accomplishments of Atlantean engineering, and required the labor of thirty thousand men for thirty-four years. But Agripides, with his usual foresight, planned it so, that the work, once done, would never require renewal, for glass is one of the most durable of substances, and is virtually immune to dissolution by the ocean waters. We have our immensurable vessels, of course, which regularly range the seas around the glass dome in search of any possible fault or fissure; but no serious damage has ever yet been discovered, and it is safe to say that the present edifice will serve us and our descendants for a hundred thousand generations."

The speaker paused, as if for effect; then, noting that his audience remained silent, he concluded, "Is there anyone that would like to ask a question?"

"Yes, I would," I surprised myself by saying.

All eyes were bent curiously upon me, and I was forced to continue, "Glass is, as you say, an exceedingly durable substance, but it is also extremely fragile. Is there no possibility that the wall will ever be cracked?"

"Cracked?" echoed the tutor, with a surprised smile. "Do you think that, if there had been such a possibility, Atlantis would not have been inundated long ago? Granted, if any very heavy object were to collide with the wall, it might be broken and we would be flooded out like ants. But how could there be any such heavy object here in the deep sea. Certainly, the fishes couldn't break through."

"No, of course not," I conceded, feeling that I had made myself ridiculous—and with that the discussion ended. But my words were often to be recalled to me in the tempestuous days that followed; and more than one of my hearers was to speak of them as strangely prophetic.

For the next hour we followed a little path that clung close to the glass wall. And, as we proceeded, my impression of its opaqueness was dissipated, for from time to time a little flickering light was momentarily visible beyond the green thicknesses; and I had disturbing remembrances of the lantern-bearing fishes that had haunted us on our way to Atlantis.

We had covered no more than a mile or two when we met with a new surprise. A brisk breeze began to blow over us; and the further we walked the sharper the breeze grew, until it assumed the fury of a gale, and for the first time since reaching Atlantis I felt cold, almost as if I were back on earth. Why we continued in the face of this strange blast I could not understand, nor whence it proceeded, nor how it had been produced. But while I was wondering and fighting my way through the wind, a singular whirling sound came to my ears, a buzzing as of gigantic flies; and gradually that sound grew louder, until from resembling the murmuring of insects it came to remind me of the flapping of colossal wings. That this noise was somehow connected with the quickening wind was apparent from the first; and the relationship became evident when the path swerved abruptly away from the wall and I glanced back, to behold a series of queer-looking machines supported

on stone pedestals high up against the glass. It would be impossible to say just what the machines were like, for they were in such rapid motion that the parts were not visible; but there were six or eight of them, and they were round, and probably each a hundred yards across; and so swiftly were they rotating that they formed each a gray blur through which the green of the wall was vaguely discernible.

"Those are the electro-intra-atomic wind generators," explained one of the tutors. "By means of these great fans and others like them stationed at various points around the wall, the atmosphere of Atlantis is kept in constant circulation. Without them the air would be stagnant and the climate sultry and unhealthy. These generators are in action at all times, with great air-wheels that make from ten to fifteen revolutions a second; and it is estimated that the daily energy consumed by each of them would be sufficient to boil a thousand tons of ice water."

We did not linger long in the vicinity of the great fans, for the strong wind was most annoying and the temperature too low for comfort. But we set out at a brisk pace across a moss-covered plain away from the wall; and we did not pause again until we had reached the city of Lerenon, which was our destination for the day.

This town, which was located some miles from the wall and yet was constantly fanned by cool breezes from the wind generators, had one striking feature all its own: it was dominated by two colossal bronze figures, one of a man, the other of a woman, which reached far above the city domes and towers halfway to the green-glass sky. Both these statues were carved with an irresistible majesty, the man's face that of an Apollo, the woman's that of a Diana; and their right hands were extended high over the city roofs and joined in a firm clasp, so unlike that I might almost have expected them to move and speak. At first I thought that they represented mythological characters, but an inscription at their base informed me of my error, for the man was meant to typify Wisdom, and the woman Beauty; and in their union above the spires and columns of Atlantis I thought I could read the meaning and purpose of the entire land.

CHAPTER XXII

The Journey Ends

DURING the thirty days of our journey, I was the witness of marvels so numerous that, if I were to dwell upon them all, I might fill hundreds of pages. Yet while there is much that cannot be recorded and much that I have forgotten, there are some observations which have stamped themselves indelibly upon my memory, and which are so essential for an understanding of Atlantis that I could not well overlook them.

Thus, I found that the wall enclosing the country formed a vast circle, of a diameter impossible to determine precisely but probably in the neighborhood of two hundred miles. Thus, also, I learned that the glass roof was at an average height of five hundred feet above the ground, although the distance varied greatly according to the level of the land; and I discovered that it was everywhere supported by myriads of the huge tinted columns—columns with steel interiors and surface of concrete or stone. I ascertained, likewise, that the Salty River followed an absolutely unbending course, flowing in a straight-line and on an even, gradual grade from the western wall of Atlantis to the eastern (since it was really a canal

rather than a river); and I was amazed and dazzled at sight of the great intra-atomic pumps which forced the torrents back into the sea.

Since they were expected to overcome a pressure of many tons to the square foot, these pumps had to be very powerful; and powerful they were, with their labyrinths of levers and revolving-chains, and three-hundred-foot pistons and rods that pounded against the waters like gigantic pile-drivers, pressing them slowly back into the sea to the accompaniment of a roaring and thundering that could be heard for miles and that proved deafening upon close approach.

The cities of Atlantis, according to the count I made, were eighteen in number (exclusive of the smaller towns and villages). But an Atlantean city, although always occupying considerable space, was what we in America should scarcely regard as a city at all, since it never had more than twenty or twenty-five thousand inhabitants. This insignificant population, when considered along with the liberal amount of territory allotted each town, accounted for the fact that no great crowds were ever to be seen on the streets; and it also explained how it was possible for efficient popular assemblages to debate and decide public questions.

But the surprising fact about the Atlantean cities was not so much their small population as their almost unbelievable variety. No town in Atlantis was like any other town; the only characteristic possessed by them all in common was their unfailing beauty. To give some idea of their amazing diversity, I might mention the city of Atolis, which, when seen from the hill that surmounted it, formed a definite pattern, resembling some colossal Grecian temple of which the streets and avenues were the columns. Or I might picture Aedla, which was built along a series of canals connecting with the Salty River, with a lake in the center, giving a Venetian effect, except that the palaces were more exquisitely designed than any in the upper world. Then, again, I might depict the small town of Acropolon, in which all the houses were connected in an enormous colonnaded quadrangle surrounding a vividly flowering park, reminding me of some university I had seen long before; or I might launch into a lengthy description of Mangona, another small town, whose houses were all roofless and collapsible, and were generally taken down during the day and put into place only at night or when the inhabitants desired seclusion.

But more interesting to me than any of these was Sardolos, one of the few present-day Atlantean cities that had existed before the Submergence. Although of course the town was not the same as in ancient times, and although its gracefully winding thoroughfares and marble friezes and frescoed domes represented the work of modern artists, yet some relics of the old days had been carefully preserved.

In one corner of the city, concealed from the general gaze in a statue-lined bronze enclosure, were the remains of buildings said to date from the second century B. S. Yet, ancient as these ruins were, my first impression was that there was something familiar about them. The most conspicuous exhibit was a stone wall, five stories high and with gaping rectangular holes where the windows had been; and to the rear was a mass of rusted and distorted steel, reaching the full height of the wall with twisted, spidery arms that had once lent it support.

"A splendid specimen of pre-Submergence architecture," stated a placard placed prominently before the exhibit. "This was the seat of the Stock Market of old Sardolos—a wholesale gambling house abolished by

the Anti-Corruption Act of the first century A. S. The mass of shapeless and desiccated stone opposite is all that remains of the Inter-Atlantean Bank, which owned a controlling share in this gambling resort; while just to the right were the ruins of the shrine in which the owners of the bank worshipped, and of the club-house in which, late in the second century B. S., they convened in the interest of their lotteries, and decided to declare the fifth Atlanto-Bengene war."

BUT when I looked to see the ruins, all that I beheld was a series of irregular stone walls, not over two or three feet high and brown with the lifeless parchment hue of extreme age. Somehow, it made me uncomfortable to look upon these vestiges of the past; nor was I relieved when I gazed at a picture of Sardolos as it had been, and saw two long opposing rows of geometrically regular five-story buildings. To think of these, and then to turn to present-day Atlantis, was merely to shudder at the contrast; yet all the while I could not repress the sense that I was standing in the presence of something undefinably familiar.

If it was somewhat irritating to gaze at the ruins of Sardolos, the disagreeable moments were few indeed during the thirty days of the journey. All in all, I have rarely taken part in so thoroughly delightful an expedition; and my joy in the trip is not to be explained merely by the engrossing sights of Atlantis, nor by the companionship of the twenty enthusiastic, friendly young students, but rather by the presence of one who meant more to me than all else that Atlantis contained. My opportunities of speaking with Aelios were not plentiful, for she seemed always to be engaged in conversation with some member of the party; but occasionally I exchanged a few words with her, and occasionally she darted a bright smile in my direction, thereby reassuring me when at times I gave way to disturbing doubts.

It was not until our travels were drawing to a close that I had another intimate talk with her. The morning of the thirtieth day had arrived, and we had set out through wide fields of the wheat-like reed toward the city of Archeon, which we hoped to reach shortly after noon. But, absorbed in somber contemplation, I took no part in the merriment of my companions, and almost from the first I lagged moodily behind them. Hence it was a relief to hear light footsteps suddenly at my side, and to find a flaxen-curved head nodding a greeting and a pair of kindly bright blue eyes peering at me inquiringly.

"Aelios!" I exclaimed. And I returned her greeting in terms that could not half express my pleasure.

She wasted no time about plunging into the subject that had brought her to me. "To-day our journey ends," she reminded me, almost regretfully. "And tomorrow you must take up your duties as a citizen. You may find matters a little strange at first. Perhaps there are already some things that puzzle you."

"Indeed there are," I admitted. "I really have very little idea what I am expected to do."

"Oh, but you must have some idea!" she remonstrated. "Why, haven't you been appointed Historian of the Upper World?"

"Yes, that is so," I murmured.

"Then you must set out at once upon your duties. In work such as yours, no record will be taken of the hours you employ, but you have a moral obligation to work not less than two hours a day."

"That doesn't seem excessive," I stated, with a smile.

"Yes, but remember you have also an obligation to

do some work on your own account for the State. And things won't be any easier, if, as you say, you will combine your assigned and chosen work."

"The real problem," I acknowledged hesitatingly, "is that I don't know the language well enough to write a history."

Aelios frowned disapprovingly. "Oh, but you have already a good speaking command of Atlantean," she pointed out. "And with practice you should be able to write passably well. Meanwhile I'd advise you to go to the government library, and read up all you can to familiarize yourself with our language—and with our life."

I thanked Aelios for the suggestion, and promised to visit the library at the first opportunity.

"But don't forget that mere working and studying won't be enough," she continued. "I hope you'll make friends of many of our people, and participate in our intellectual contests and recreations. You might even join one of the political parties."

"Political parties?" I repeated. "I didn't know there were any parties in Atlantis."

"Oh, yes, of course there are," she quickly returned. "There are always several parties to present their opinions at the Hall of Public Enlightenment."

"What parties are those?" I inquired.

"Well, let's see," she enumerated, reflectively. "First of all, there's the Party of Submergence, so-called because it was founded by Agrippides and has been the ruling group ever since the Good Destruction. Then there is the Industrial Reform Party, which contends that all machines and in particular intra-atomic engines are incongruous in Atlantis and should be reduced to a minimum far below the present number. Then, again, there is the Party of Artistic Emancipation, which is really literary rather than political, and appeals for freedom in art. Also, there is the Party of Birth Extension, which maintains that the government should relax its restrictions on population. And, finally, enlarging the principles of the Birth Extension Party, there is the Party of Emergence, which is the smallest of them all and has always been highly unpopular if not actually despised, since it holds that we should renounce the principles of Agrippides, enter into communication with the upper world, and send our excess population to live above seas."

"That sounds quite interesting," I commented, for the Party of Emergence seemed to me to be the most understandable of the group. "But you say this last party has never had much success?"

"Fortunately not. Its members have always been looked down upon as anti-social agitators, for they have transgressed against that fundamental principle, 'Atlantis for the Atlanteans.' Few self-respecting citizens have ever lent them support, and they have never been powerful enough to carry any of their proposals."

"Too bad," I found myself remarking, with unguarded frankness; and the shocked expression on Aelios' face showed me how I had erred.

"At any rate, now that you know something about the parties, you will be better able to choose among them," she concluded.

I assured her that I would choose as best I could.

"If there's ever anything you're in doubt about," she urged, "don't be afraid to ask me. I know that things aren't easy here for you, a stranger from a strange land, and I'd like to help if I could."

I thanked her fervently, and declared that I should not hesitate to consult her should occasion rise. And secretly I was determined that the occasion should arise.

"I'm glad to hear you say that," she returned. And her eyes shone with a bright light, and her lips quivered sympathetically, and her whole face radiated kindness and warmth.

But at this junction she saw fit to give the intervening an impersonal turn. "See, over there!" she exclaimed, pointing through a break in the dense green foliage. "Those are the towers of Archeon!"

I looked eagerly, and far across the plain I beheld a minute glittering spire, more than half obscured by the intervening array of tinted columns—the first sign of that city which I was this day to enter, and where I was to make my home, and seek the fulfillment of my love, and undertake my duties as a citizen of the Sunken World.

CHAPTER XXIII

Xanocles

AS an accredited citizen of Atlantis, I was assigned to permanent lodgings immediately after returning to Archeon. The housing representative of the Atlantean government (the only substitute in the Sunken World for our "realtors") accompanied me on a leisurely tour of the city, allowing me my choice of not less than fifteen or twenty apartments. The task of selection was by no means easy, not because it was hard to secure suitable quarters but because it was difficult to choose among so many desirable places. Never before had I realized how utterly superior the Atlantean homes were to our own—out of all the houses I visited, there was not one that was not separated by wide spaces from its neighbors, or that did not enjoy a full share of air and light, or that did not look comfortable and alluring. The grim and musty interiors of many of our own dwellings, the furniture-littered rooms, the glaring bad taste of gilt and tinsel chairs and adornments, found no parallel among the Atlantean residences I visited. Instead, each apartment was so artlessly inviting that I might have claimed it at once as my home.

The distinguishing feature of most of the Atlantean houses was a central court that reminded me of the dwellings of the ancient world. Usually the court was square or rectangular in shape, though in some instances it was hexagonal or round; and more often than not it was completely enclosed. Some of the courts were surrounded by stalwart columns, but the majority were plain. Some had walls of granite, some of marble, some of a peculiar bluish stone that I could not recognize; some were marked by spangled fountains, some by flower-gardens, some by swimming pools; and the most distinctive of all was arranged as an art gallery, with a dominating statue in the center and paintings hung at intervals along the sides. But whatever the particular contents of the court, it was certain to be accessible by four or five doors leading into the several apartments.

After inspecting the various prospective lodgings, I finally decided in favor of a little three-room suite (three rooms, that is, in addition to the sleeping chamber on the roof) which looked out over a tree-lined expanse toward the sapphire dome of the Hall of Public Enlightenment. I was urged to take these quarters largely because of the fascination of the frieze-lined adjoining court, whose finely modelled images of gods and nymphs and satyrs offered me a prospect of fruitful study. But I was also captivated by the rooms themselves, which gave a bizarre effect with their walls decked with seaweed tapestries, and which seemed at once like a home and a temple with

their high vaulted ceilings, their arching doorways and great elliptical windows, and their removable partitions capable of transforming the entire apartment into a single good-sized hall.

IT was perhaps fortunate that I chose these particular lodgings, for otherwise I might never have known Xanocles, who was to be my one intimate among all the men of Atlantis. It so happened that he—that fiery spirit, audacious thinker, and trustworthy friend—had chosen his abode in the same building; and it also happened (since fate works in inscrutable ways even in Atlantis) that he and I were early thrown together. It was, indeed, on the very day after my return to Archeon that Xanocles and I met. I had just settled in my new home, and had gone out into the court for my first close inspection of its mural decorations, when a door across from me slid open and a tall, white-clad figure emerged. A single glance would have told me that the stranger was exceptional, and a single glance perhaps told him that I was exceptional in Atlantis: for he paused in startled surprise, and for an embarrassed instant we stood staring inquiringly at one another. In that first fleeting glimpse I had an impression of a powerful personality; a large head poised squarely over a pair of broad and capable shoulders; two vivid blue eyes deeply set beneath a massive brow; a beardless oval face dominated by flowing chestnut locks; classic features, with chin and nose consummately modelled. But I did not notice then what I was often to observe later: the ironic glitter in the alert eyes, the forceful and determined lines into which the face would habitually settle, the air of overflowing vigor tempered by an easy self-command. Judging from the smooth contours of the man's face, I took him to be not over thirty years of age; and I was later much surprised to learn that he was well past forty (since in Atlantis people do not age so rapidly as on earth).

"By Agripides! You must be one of those visitors from up above!" exclaimed the newcomer, recovering from his astonishment. And he approached me with a winning smile, and held out both hands by way of greeting. "My name is Xanocles. We seem to be neighbors, you and I. Perhaps we can get to know each other."

"I hope we shall," I seconded, as I took his hands. "My name is Harkness. I've just finished my tour around Atlantis, and now I'm supposed to begin duty as a citizen."

"That's quick work," nodded Xanocles, approvingly. And then, after an instant's pause, "So you're appointed the Historian of the Upper World?"

I pleaded guilty to the accusation.

"I knew it must be so," explained my new acquaintance, "because only one of the immigrants has been admitted to citizenship. Of course, there will be others later on."

"Won't you come in?" I invited, with a gesture toward my new apartments.

Xanocles needed no second invitation. A minute later we were seated opposite one another on seaweed cushions in the little room that was to be my study.

"It seems to me, Harkness," he suggested, using my name as familiarly as though he had known me all my life, "we might as well be frank with one another from the beginning. At least, I might as well be frank with you. And I'd better start by warning you that you'll not gain much from acquaintance with me. I'm none too popular."

"No?" I demanded, wondering vaguely what offense he had committed.

"No," he confessed. "I'm so very unpopular, in fact, that it may reflect upon you even to be seen in my company."

"But what is it that you've done?" I asked, thinking it strange that this attractive and able-looking man should be so disliked. "Surely, you haven't blown up a building, or stolen some one's jewels, or killed a man—"

A frown of disgust passed across Xanocles' face. "Such primitive forms of violence," he reminded me, "are unknown in Atlantis. No, I haven't stooped to anything so low. But I've done something bad enough in the eyes of the people."

"I'll have to give it up," said I, growing more puzzled each moment.

"It shouldn't be hard to guess—not if you know the ways of Atlantis," he continued, gravely. "I've joined the Party of Emergence."

"The Party of Emergence?" I exclaimed, remembering what Aelios had told me of this minority group.

"I've not only joined the party," he acknowledged, completing the indictment, "but I've let them elect me one of their Debating Delegates."

"But I don't exactly understand—" I admitted, hesitatingly.

"You would understand if you knew more about Atlantis. Every people has to have its pet aversion, I suppose, and our pet aversion down here is the Emergence Party. That's because it opposes the principles of the one hundred per cent Atlanteans."

"But just what is the Emergence Party?" I inquired, still in doubt as to the tenets of this detested faction. "Is it anything so terrible?"

"That all depends upon the point of view," declared Xanocles, enigmatically.

He paused long enough to give me an instant's scrutiny with keen and quizzical eyes. "I am not sure that you would understand," he decided, speaking as much to himself as to me. "But the main thing is that we oppose the compulsory limitation of population."

"Compulsory limitation of population?" I repeated, wondering if I had heard him correctly.

"Most certainly. You've heard, perhaps, that our population is limited by law to five hundred thousand."

"But that's impossible!" I cried, incredulously.

"Experience has proved quite the contrary," he dissented.

FOR a moment I did not reply. I merely sat staring at my companion, trying to fathom the secret hidden in those inscrutable grave eyes of his. And though he gave no sign of not being utterly truthful, I ended by giving expression to my scepticism.

"What do you do with your extra inhabitants? Do they emigrate to the center of the earth? Or do you prefer to shoot them or drown them, or perhaps to asphyxiate them humanely?"

"There are no extra inhabitants," was the surprising reply. "Do you know nothing of the Milares Compulsory Population Law?"

I was forced to confess my ignorance.

"Then let me enlighten you," volunteered Xanocles, with a tolerant smile. "First let me take you back a few thousand years, to the days just after the Submergence. At that time the population of Atlantis was several millions, and the swarms of our people were so dense that long hours of labor were necessary, living quarters were crowded and unsanitary, and there was little time for the creation or appreciation of beauty. This state of affairs endured for over a

century, when, after much discussion, the Milares Compulsory Population Law was passed, and the citizenry was gradually reduced to its present satisfactory numbers."

"And what was the Milares Population Law?" I asked.

"It is the law that is still the backbone of our life. According to Milares, a great social philosopher of the second century A. S., the most important of public questions is that of parentage. He maintained that the parents of each generation might either poison or uplift the next; and all of his numerous pamphlets and books bore the warning that persons congenitally deficient in mind or physique should not be permitted to breed, while those of the higher physical and intellectual qualities should be encouraged.

"In pursuance of these views, Milares proposed a basic innovation in social customs; he recommended that the institution of marriage be dissevered from that of parenthood. In other words, while marriage—and likewise divorce—should be permitted to all that desired it, parenthood should become a subject of drastic state regulation: any young couple wishing children must have their fitness examined by a carefully selected State board. Since effective methods of birth control were known, this system was wholly practical, and, in fact, has proved—"

"But what if the orders of the Board were disobeyed?" I interrupted. "Certainly, the unlawful newcomer couldn't be punished."

"Certainly not. But a stigma would attach to the parents—the stain of illegitimacy."

"You mean that the parents would be considered illegitimate?"

"Exactly. And the disgrace is so great that few persons have ever offended in that way. As a result, we have never at any time exceeded the prescribed population by more than ten or twelve thousands."

"Even so," I contended, rather vaguely, "it seems to me that such a system would be altogether too arbitrary to succeed."

"Yet it has succeeded splendidly. The experience of nearly three thousand years has vindicated it beyond dispute. Do you think that, at the time of the Submergence, our men and women enjoyed such perfection of physical beauty as today? Or do you imagine that the intellectual and artistic types were then predominant? Far from it! Thousands upon thousands were sickly and stunted in body; a myriad were imbecilic, weak-minded or insane. But thanks to the rigidity of the selection, these types have been entirely eliminated; and, owing largely to the same cause, the average human life has been lengthened from the pre-Submergence figure of sixty-five years to a hundred and twenty—which means that the man of ability has a whole century of mature service to render instead of a mere four or five decades."

I had no choice except to admit that the results were marvelous. But at the same time I remembered a vital oversight in Xanocles' recitation. "All this tells me nothing of the Party of Emergence," I pointed out. "In fact, if the Milares Population Law has worked so successfully, I cannot understand why you should oppose it."

"It would not be strictly correct to say that we oppose it," he explained. "We recognize its beneficent results, but we believe that the time has come to modify it. Not that we would increase the population of Atlantis beyond the half million mark, for that would be to impose an intolerable burden upon us all; but we hold that many deserving persons are being deprived of parenthood, and that many more children

of the highest quality might be born. To furnish a simple illustration, the Board seems to believe it unwise to perpetuate the radical strains, and so rules with suspicious frequency against members of the Party of Emergence."

"Then precisely what is it that your party advocates?" I questioned.

"Just what our name implies: to let our surplus population emerge into the upper world. That would be easily possible, for the submersible repair ships that range the ocean about the glass wall would be capable of conveying us above seas. Of course, there might be no possibility of a return, but a return would not be desirable; it would be enough to insure life for thousands of our unborn sons and daughters, and to remake the upper world by an infiltration of our superior blood and standards. "Besides,"—here Xanocles hesitated perceptibly—"there is another reason."

"What is that?" I felt bound to inquire.

Xanocles remained silent for a moment, staring abstractedly toward the romping fauns and mermaids on the seaweed tapestries of the opposite wall. Then slowly he resumed, "We hold—and in this we are violently combated by our friends of the Submergence Party—that there was one minor flaw in the plans of Agripides. In a thousand respects his projects were perfect; but we believe that in the thousandth and first he made an oversight—perhaps an unavoidable oversight. He did not leave room enough in Atlantis for adventure. Everything here is so well designed that there is little chance for daring courage, the unknown—little chance for sheer primitive rashness and hardihood. Our games and recreations, our art, our political contests, of course consume much of our surplus energy; but, after all, we are the children of savage ancestors, and among our young there is a craving for keener experience. And so we of the Emergence Party favor the increase of population, so that those who wish may enjoy the greatest adventure of all—may launch their vessels toward unknown worlds!"

"You would find that adventure well worth taking," I commented.

"Then you—you perhaps agree with the Party of Emergence?" cried Xanocles, rising and coming toward me enthusiastically.

"Perhaps I do," I admitted, also rising, and taking his extended hands. And as I felt his hearty clasp, it seemed to me that I had not only gained a friend but found my political allegiance.

CHAPTER XXIV

What the Books Revealed

AMID all the excitement of my return to Archeon, my establishment in new quarters and my meeting with Xanocles, I had not forgotten Aelios' advice to visit the library at the first opportunity. Nor had I forgotten my official duties as Historian of the Upper World, nor the necessity for acquiring more explicit knowledge of undersea customs before I could hope to interpret my own country to the Atlanteans. Hence I was determined to accomplish a double object: to prepare myself for my prescribed work and at the same time to gratify my curiosity by an extensive course of reading.

As soon as I was fully settled in my new apartment, I set out for the main government library—and with highly interesting and even startling results. I found the building without difficulty: a many-domed edifice of granite and white chalcidony, located in a large

flower-bordered square near the center of town. Had I not been able to identify it from the descriptions, I might have recognized it by the streams of people constantly filing in and out, giving me the feeling that it was the business heart of the city.

Yet my first impressions of the library were bewildering in the extreme. Not only was the building one of the largest I had seen (covering not less than five or six acres) but the volumes it harbored were amazing in their profusion and variety. My first surprise was at the discovery that there were no railings, fences or locked doors, as in all other libraries I had known, but that the visitor was admitted without question to every room and corridor; my second surprise—and a far greater one—was caused by the queer arrangement of the books. For the volumes were catalogued and stacked, not alphabetically, but chronologically; there was a gallery reserved for each century of Atlantean history, down to the seventh century B. S.; and within the galleries, the books were arranged by authors and subjects in a way that impressed me as utterly novel. In a niche among the books, for example, one would observe the bust of a stern-browed, bearded man; and, coming close, one would note that this was the poet Sargos; and just below the bust one would find the complete collection of the poet's works, as well as the commentaries upon them. Or, in another corner of the room, one would pause to admire the painting of a crowded ancient seaport; and the inscription below the painting would tell one that this was the vanished maritime city of Therion; and just beneath this inscription would be the books wherein Therion was pictured and discussed.

In a way, the building reminded me of a museum as much as of a library, for, in addition to the paintings and statues, each gallery was featured by furniture, rugs, vases, tapestries and decorations that corresponded with the original date of the books. The effect of oddity was enhanced by the fact that the volumes themselves, while in many cases modern reprints, were not infrequently bound in the style of their first editions; and the total impression was most curious and interesting, considering the contrasting sizes and the numberless shades and colors of the books, and the various grades of silk, parchment and artificial leather in which they were attired.

Yet the appearance of the books was the least noteworthy fact about them. Their sheer abundance was a source of unceasing astonishment to me—it seemed as if every era in Atlantean history had been a literary one. As nearly as I could determine, there had been an average of several hundred books a year which had been thought worthy of preservation—and the high period of productivity had already endured for twenty-five centuries! Nor were the favored works merely stored up in dusty shelves where they might remain forever unnoticed—every book of the scores which I opened had been well thumbed, and the crowds constantly browsing along the alcoves and aisles gave evidence that literary interest was not purely a thing of the past.

It was not long before I myself felt inclined to emulate those enthusiasts. Seated in company with twenty or thirty Atlanteans before the long marble table that adorned the most modern of the galleries, I began to taste the contents of several books I had selected at random; and so delightful did they prove, that it was four or five hours before I had any thought of leaving.

While all of the books I inspected proved richly diverting, the one that had interested me most

was a little volume entitled "Social Life in the Thirty-first Century." When I recall today the unusual size of the type and the extreme simplicity of the style, I feel sure that the book was designed for an immature audience; but this fact did not then occur to me, and I found the work admirably suited to my needs. Questions that had been perplexing me ever since my arrival in Atlantis were now explained in a manner that dispersed all doubts; and I found myself possessed of a clearer conception than ever before of Atlantean ideas and institutions.

I had been wondering, for example, about the statue-like palace wherein Rawson and I had been imprisoned; I was now informed that this, "The Temple of the Stars," was among the oldest buildings in Atlantis, having been erected just before the Submergence so that the people might bring back to mind at will the aspect of the skies. I had been wondering, likewise, about the "Hall of Public Enlightenment," that amber-hued and sapphire theatre in which I had lately witnessed several debates; I now read that such a building had been erected centuries before in each of the Atlantean cities as a place of popular assemblage, a sort of forum, wherein the people might decide upon public questions; and I also learned that any citizen might attend the meetings there, that any might take part in the discussions, and that it was at such popular gatherings that the few laws of the country were proposed and the most important problems weighed and settled.

The discussion of the Halls of Public Enlightenment naturally paved the way for a description of the political system and government of the Sunken World. "The State of Atlantis," I read, "is neither a monarchy, an oligarchy, nor a republic. It is a Commonality, which means that all things are possessed in common by the people and all activities shared among them. At the head of the Atlantean State is the High Chief Adviser, whose principal duty is by way of counseling the people, but who decides certain specified minor questions confronting the Atlantean State and is empowered to assume dictatorial authority in case of a national crisis (although such a crisis has never occurred since the riots of the second century A. S., following the passage of the Milares Compulsory Population Law).

"Like all the other officials of Atlantis, the High Chief Adviser assumes his position neither by appointment nor by heredity nor by election, but by Automatic Selection; in other words, he has taken office after defeating all rivals in a series of debates and rigorous competitive examinations. His term of office is indefinite, but every three years he is expected to prove his fitness by engaging in contests with qualified aspirants for the Advisorship; and unless he can still outdo all opponents, a new chief executive is installed."

It would have seemed to me that such a system would have detracted from the dignity of the High Chief Adviser; but the book informed me that, on the contrary, it added to his dignity, since he was assured of holding office on a basis of merit only. In fact, he was bound to keep fit and even to improve himself while in office; and most High Chief Advisers did actually remain so well qualified that they stayed in power for an average term of thirty years. Indeed, Icenocles (the incumbent at the time of the publication of the book) had already ruled for forty-five years, and now, at the mature age of one hundred and seven, he still regularly put all competitors to shame.

He always led in the competitions.

ALL this, of course, told me nothing about Atlantean law-making, law enforcement and the administration of justice. Therefore I eagerly read on and found many of my questions speedily answered. To my astonishment, I learned that there was no such thing as a legislature or a law-making group in Atlantis!—and yet such bodies were not unknown to the native political theory. "Ancient experience has taught us," said the book, "that representative government usually represents only some particular faction. And in a community whose members are few and all of whose citizens are intelligent, there is no necessity for delegated authority. Local statutes and ordinances were abolished in Atlantis at the time of the Submergence; and the few national laws are proposed in any of the cities in the Hall of Public Enlightenment. Having been debated and approved by an assemblage of a hundred citizens or more, the measure is submitted to a referendum of all the Atlanteans after the lapse of thirty days—and a majority vote will suffice for its passage.

"At the head of each city is a Local Adviser, selected in the same manner as the High Chief Adviser; and, aided by a corps of from five to fifteen assistants also chosen competitively, he decides those questions not settled in the popular assemblies—questions such as the amount of energy to be devoted to the erection of new buildings, the time and nature of local festivals, the regulation of local hygienic problems, the number of public physicians required to attend the ill and aged, and a dozen other matters of practical and artistic concern. Equally important theoretically, though in actual practice far less so, is the court of eleven judges which presides in each town, settling all disputes among citizens and reprimanding the law-breakers. No doubt there were frequently such persons as law-breakers three thousand years ago, when these courts were planned, but to-day such offenders are virtually unknown, for the only crimes are those of impulse and passion, and these are exceedingly rare—fortunately, the congenital criminals have been wiped out along with lunatics and morons by our rigorous birth selection. Occasionally, indeed, some diseased person will break some unwritten rule of society, such as that against trapping or slaying fishes or small animals; but the government hospitals care for such unfortunates, just as they care for the criminals of impulse, and not infrequently effect a cure. As for disputes among individuals, they are as obsolete as embezzlement or highway robbery, for now that the ownership of property has been abolished, what is there left to quarrel about? And so for the most part our courts endure somewhat as the appendix endures in the human body—mere anachronistic reminders of an age that is no more."

At a single sitting I read my book from cover to cover. Even aside from what I have already mentioned, the facts that it told me were innumerable and highly varied: how the great golden lamps of Atlantis were electrically lighted, and were switched on and off at specified intervals by country-wide clockwork; how all Atlanteans, old and young, ill and healthy, were cared for by the State, so that no man was weighed down with dependents; how disease had been almost wiped out, since all the commoner noxious germs had been conquered; how religion in the organized sense had ceased to exist, for the reason that each man was expected to arrive at his own philosophy; how the temples that littered the country were without theological meaning, but were sanctuaries of beauty whereto any one might come at any time to worship amid the solitude of his own thoughts;

how education was one of the prime pursuits of the people, and was participated in by all from childhood to old age, but was never undertaken by the mob method popular in the upper world.

From the few pages that the author of the "Social Life" devoted to the latter subject, I feel sure that the Atlanteans would have been horrified at our system of herding forty or fifty children together in subjection to a glowering pedagogue: their theory was that personal and friendly contact with the teacher was the important thing, and so their boys and girls were taught in small groups, and never for many hours a day, nor with more than a minimum of restraint upon their natural spirits, nor in a specified and unvarying place, for as often as not their school-room was a marble colonnade or the court of a temple or even the open fields. And, in the same way, the higher education among the Atlanteans (except in the case of scientific work requiring laboratory training) was much less formal than among us. There were no such things as universities or university degrees, but men and women of recognized wisdom and learning were chosen to commune with the young and discuss with them the problems of life, much as Socrates did when he presided among his disciples; and these "Guardians of the Mind," as they were called, would counsel and direct their young charges, and guide them in that reading which constituted their primary source of information.

CHAPTER XXV

Duties and Pastimes

IT is from my first visit to the library that I date my real initiation into the affairs of Atlantis. From that time forth I was no longer a stranger in an unknown world; I became involved in such a round of activities that I began to feel almost at home. For it was my good fortune to have plenty to do, far more to do, in fact, than the average Atlantean; and with the demands of the Sunken World calling me on the one hand, and my old companions of the X-111 drawing me on the other, I did not have far to seek for an interest in life.

First of all, of course, I was applying myself to my "History of the Upper World." It took me a month to plan the book, though meanwhile I devoted hours a day to improving my knowledge of the Atlantean language and institutions. And when finally I had completed my preliminary outline it did not satisfy me entirely, and yet seemed adequate as a working basis. The introductory section of the book—necessarily a lengthy affair—was to be devoted to a description of the modern world, to the various nations, their customs, languages, social systems, scientific advances and wars; and having begun with this grand resumé of modern achievement, I intended to show the steps by which that achievement had been consummated, and to picture in general the course of those social fluctuations, those invasions, battles, slave-raids, civil conflicts, religious persecutions, crusades, economic revolutions, industrial tumults and international blood-feuds that have brought civilization to its present proud estate.

But while I was planning my book, my thoughts were frequently on more personal subjects. And, having completed the outline, I could not forget a certain invitation made me by the most fascinating woman in Atlantis, but wasted no time about seeking her advice and approval.

Late one afternoon, when I knew that her tutoring

would be over for the day, I paid my second visit to her home. I went just a little hesitatingly, I remember, yet not without some justifiable hope, for our interview was to begin most auspiciously. It was Aelios herself that came to the door in response to my knock; and it was Aelios that escorted me into the house, with cordial greetings and delighted smiles that reaffirmed my impression of her unrivaled merits.

"Well, my friend, I thought you would be coming," said she, simply, as we took seats side by side on the seaweed sofa we had occupied on my first visit.

"But what made you think that?" I questioned.

"Why, didn't you say you would come?" she returned, in unfeigned surprise. "You're undertaking a difficult task, you know—to write a book in a strange language. Isn't it only natural to want advice?"

"It is, indeed," I confessed, and should have liked to add, "when I can have such a charming adviser."

"I suppose you've been working hard," she continued, evidently unaware of what was in my thoughts. "And, of course, you've brought something with you to show me."

"Yes, I have brought something," I admitted; and, there being no choice, I forthwith unfolded the paper that contained my plans for the history.

For several minutes she gazed at it intently, her features furrowed with thought, while eagerly I awaited her verdict.

"This is going to be very interesting," she at length decided. "As far as I can see, you've covered most of the important points. You will find it easier than I thought to write in our language—your beginning is most promising. Of course, you do make some errors of style. . . ." And she proceeded to point out my mistakes, in such a manner that I felt certain never to repeat them.

For possibly an hour or two we discussed my outline, though all the while I was conscious that there was something in Atlantis far more interesting to me than my book.

I was still aware of that fact, when, at last, feeling that it was growing late, I arose reluctantly to leave. As she took my hand, Aelios flashed upon me her most genial smile, and requested, "Come again, my friend. Perhaps I'll be able to help you some more. Our doors are always open, you know."

"Well, if it wouldn't be asking too much of you," I started to reply, fumbling for words, while the blood rushed all at once to my head.

"It will be a pleasure. And besides"—here she hesitated momentarily, and her fingers absently toyed with the folds of her gown—"besides, if I help you with your book, I will also be helping the State."

"Yes, possibly that's true," I conceded. And so what could I do but agree to give Aelios a further opportunity to help the State?

But if I based any glamorous hopes upon her evident friendliness, I was building without knowledge of my foundations. Not long after my visit to her, a chance conversation showed me how far I was from that goal which my more sanguine fancies pictured.

IT was Xanocles that unwittingly made me see the difficulties. During one of our numerous little talks, he touched casually upon the marriage system of Atlantis. "The Milares Compulsory Population Law," he chanced to inform me, "is perhaps not the only reason for the present superiority of the Atlantean stock. Another factor is what I may call the marital selection. This is regulated primarily by custom and is almost exclusively in the hands of the women, yet is so rigid that an inferior man can

hardly find a mate—indeed, a superior woman would be disgraced by linking herself to a weakling."

"But just what do you mean by a weakling?" I inquired.

Xanocles looked at me in surprise. "A weakling, of course, is one with nothing to give to society. A great poet, for example, could never be thought of as a weakling; nor a competent painter, nor philosopher, nor musician, nor biologist. But the man whose contributions show no particular skill or individuality is regarded as a weakling, no matter what his pursuit. Naturally, he is not condemned so long as he does his best; but he is not regarded as a fit subject for marriage except with another weakling—and, needless to say, weaklings are not permitted to propagate."

If Xanocles noticed that I was moody and silent for the rest of the day, the reason would not have been hard to find. I do not believe that, in my own world, I had ever suffered from what is known as an inferiority complex; but among the Atlanteans, with their higher standards, mere honesty demanded that I question my own qualifications. And what, I wondered, had I to offer to a woman such as Aelios? Would not my meagre attainments appear childish and unattractive to her? Even if I finished my "History of the Upper World," would it not be a second-rate affair, altogether incapable of winning her admiration? And would I not, by comparison with the natives, be considered a weakling, a man whom Aelios could not marry without incurring disgrace?

For days and weeks I was harassed by such thoughts; and it was to be long before I had wholly recovered. Meanwhile, however, I was partially consoled by the companionship of Xanocles. The friendship begun at our first meeting, was strengthening and solidifying in the course of the months; the proximity of our lodgings rendered it easy for us to see one another, but there also seemed to be a certain proximity of mind, which made each of us take pleasure in the company of the other; and in spite of the gulf of race, training and experience, we found that we actually had more in common than many persons who have spent all their lives in the same home. And so he would often seek me out, and we would spend hours exchanging ideas in the dim seclusion of my rooms; and often I would seek him out, and we would hold friendly debates in the quiet of his rooms; and not infrequently we might have been seen strolling arm in arm about the city, while I pictured to him the wonders and vastness of the upper world, or while he in his turn regaled me with colorful reminiscences, and told how he was employed by the State as a binder and designer of books, but how he spent his spare time in writing economic and philosophical treatises or delivering lectures in favor of the Emergence.

It was under the pilotage of Xanocles that I was introduced to the social life of Atlantis. The Atlanteans did not spend all their time in grave and serious pursuits, as I had at first imagined; they did not devote themselves to art until it palled upon them, or seek for beauty until it became blurred and illusory; but they knew how to vary their lives and make them symmetrical, and they had quite as much time for laughter and recreation as for earnest endeavor and sober thought. Indeed, they proved to be an unusually sociable people; and after I had entered with Xanocles into the rare spirit of their life and pastimes, I was forced to conclude that a prime reason for the success of Atlantean society was the sane balance it preserved, and the fact that its more ideal aims were tempered by a recognition and a measured encouragement of all the normal inclinations of man.

FOR sheer range and variety, the Atlantean pastimes excelled those of any other people I had ever encountered. To begin with the simplest first, there were athletic games, races and competitions that might have been popular even in the upper world; and on the outskirts of Archeon were fields where the young and even the middle-aged gathered in crowds, testing their prowess by boxing and wrestling, by hurling round, flat objects like the ancient discus, by sprinting along specified race-courses, by engaging in a sort of ball game remotely like tennis, or by participating in that more popular contest known as "sortos," which reminded me of baseball except for the fact that it did not require so many players. I was surprised to observe that the Atlanteans could enter into these sports with hot enthusiasm; but I also noted that they could view their athletics with sanity, and were interested in their games only while actually engaged in them, and did not come forth in throngs as mere onlookers, nor waste time discussing the contests beforehand or after they were over, nor prostitute their spirit to a professional or commercial outlook.

Not less popular than the athletics—in fact, probably much more popular—were the dances that featured prominently in Atlantean life. These were of a hundred styles and varieties, from the ethereal butterfly movements of trained women, such as Aellos, to the tripping and capering of children keeping time spontaneously to the rhythm of a song. Leaving out of account the dances for which unusual skill was necessary, the most interesting to my mind were those held on the polished floors of the temples, where as many as a hundred men and women would gather, all swaying synchronously to the subdued beat of the music, some in couples holding hands and some singly, but all lightly passing back and forth with bird-like co-ordinated movements, until as one watched, one lost sight of individuals and thought of them all only as the parts of some exquisite, ever-varying whole.

It was not surprising to me to observe that the Atlantean love of the dance was matched by an equal taste for music. Having no technical musical knowledge, I cannot comment upon the Atlantean development of the art, except to say that its cultivation was widespread, that public concerts were held almost daily in the halls of Archeon, and that invariably their effect upon me was pleasing beyond anything I had ever heard on earth. Perhaps it was that the Atlantean music possessed in a high degree the power of awakening ecstasy and visions; perhaps it was that its restrained melancholy and plaintive rapture were as keys that unlocked a universe beyond the universe of sense, and brought the time-bound spirit into touch with the timeless; but, at all events, it possessed a ravishing power reminding me of the most consummate violin performances, and yet surpassing even the violin in the almost complete severance it effected between body and soul.

Much the same may be said of the drama in Atlantis—a drama almost as popular as the music, and built like the music upon that beauty which reaches beyond time and space. The prose drama seems never to have been introduced; poetry, as the natural vehicle for ecstatic expression, was evidently regarded as the inevitable substance of all plays; and the playwrights were all in a tradition that might have appealed to Sophocles and Euripides, although they had never heard of those master dramatists. Indeed, Atlantis had a score of dramatic writers who in my judgment were in no way inferior to any produced by classical Greece; and the best works of these authors, staged with picturesque simplicity and presented by actors of

power, afforded me some of the most absorbing hours I passed during all my years in Atlantis.

But if delighted by such performances, I was not less pleased to note that dramatics flourished also on a small scale. In any little social gathering one of the most popular diversions would be the improvisation and acting of short plays; and the proficiency of the Atlanteans in this game seemed almost incredible to me, for the actors would not only originate their own little dramas, but would speak their impromptu lines with feeling and beauty; and so deeply was the spirit of poetry engrained that long fluent passages of exceptional verse would sometimes be delivered spontaneously.

Beyond these dramatic exhibitions, the chief private pastime of the Atlanteans was in the art of discussion. To say that discussion was an art is not to exaggerate; it was believed that the mark of the cultured man was his ability to express himself intelligently; and themes for consideration in an Atlantean drawing room varied from the latest poetry and the latest music to the nature of the human personality and the ultimate meaning of life. To the self-respecting citizen, it would have been an insult to suggest that he avoid the boredom of conversation by games of dominoes or cards; and it would have seemed ludicrous to attempt to gossip concerning one's food or clothes, one's athletic prowess, one's neighbor's idiosyncrasies or bad manners, or any of those hundred and one subjects that might have proved diverting in upper world conversation.

WHILE Xanocles was introducing me to the social life of Atlantis, much of my time was being taken up by social life of a different type. Now that I had been elevated to the dignity of Atlantean citizenship, I could not forget that I had thirty-eight comrades who aspired to a similar honor. I saw fully as much of my former shipmates as before; indeed, I saw some of them more than ever, and in particular Captain Gavison, who would frequently visit me to exchange reminiscences; and I rubbed shoulders with the whole crew at the regular bi-weekly meetings of the Upper World Club, which were now held in my apartment.

These meetings were sometimes exciting affairs, perhaps because there was little else in Atlantis which offered the possibility of excitement. Looking back after the lapse of years, it is not easy for me to recall just what there was to be agitated about; but it is certain that we would be agitated indeed, and that there would be fiery debates and discussions, which occasionally became so heated that President Gavison would rap and rap with the bit of stone that served him as gavel, raising his voice until he almost shouted and the sheer awe of his presence would restore order. As nearly as I can remember, most of the disputes were due to conflicting opinions of Atlantis; for frequently one of the club members would denounce the Sunken World in the most picturesque terms at his disposal; and immediately some champion of Atlantis would spring to his feet in disagreement, and the debate would wax fast and furious, most of the club taking a part, until the imperious voice of the President would put an end to the contest.

Sometimes, however, the altercation would be over some proposal for improving our status in Atlantis. Many and curious were the views as to the drawbacks of our lot; and one of our members would be likely to suggest that we attempt the construction of a motor boat or of an automobile; and another would

be convinced that a prime shortcoming of Atlantis was the absence of the phonograph or of motion pictures; and many would toy fondly with the idea of escape, and would advocate wild and wholly impractical schemes that would foment a tumult in the club. As time went by, it became increasingly apparent that the majority would never be reconciled to Atlantis; they felt estranged by its art, overwhelmed by its majesty, irritated by its *saute* peacefulness; and while they still studied the native language for several hours a day, and at times derived much satisfaction from being allowed a part in the native pastimes and athletics, yet on the whole they felt out of place in an atmosphere not adapted to them, and were coming to look upon the upper world as a sort of lost Elysium.

CHAPTER XXVI

Curiosities, Freaks and Monstrosities

EVEN though my companions felt constantly ill at ease in Atlantis, yet as the weeks went by they were becoming more proficient in the use of the native tongue and were taking their places in the life of the Sunken World. One by one they were being summoned, as I had been summoned, before the Committee on Selective Assignments; and each in turn was ordered to perform some specified daily work after taking the usual thirty days' tour around Atlantis.

Captain Gavison, as one of the most adept of all in mastering the language, was one of the first to be graduated into citizenship. But his advancement brought him no great pleasure, since his prescribed duty was to spend two and a half hours daily in a bureau engaged in compiling statistics of population and industry; and his chosen work for the State, which was to write a comparison of Atlantean and upper world civilization, gave him no end of trouble owing not only to linguistic difficulties but to his lack of training in authorship.

Meanwhile Stranahan and Rawson had also matriculated into citizenship; but their assigned work differed strikingly from the Captain's. Rawson, as a well formed and brawny youth, was permitted to exercise his muscles for an hour and a half daily in a marble quarry some miles to the north of the city; while Stranahan, who had been given his choice of several occupations, decided that it would suit him best to serve three hours daily as doorman at the Archeon City Museum.

It seemed almost as if this position had been made to order for him; for when he stood at the museum entrance, robed in an official red, and politely directed visitors to the various aisles and departments, he had the dignity of one born to a lofty station. His work was not altogether easy, he assured me, for the exhibits were many and confusing, and he had difficulty in memorizing their names and positions; yet to see him as he swayed commandingly from side to side of the great arched doorway, with chest thrown well out and hands folded sedately behind him, one could scarcely have believed that he was troubled by any doubts, but might have imagined him to be the owner and creator of the building.

Indeed, the interest which he took in the museum seemed to be almost personal. He summoned the whole Upper World Club to inspect it, as though it had been his own handiwork; and he directed us from gallery to gallery and from exhibit to exhibit with the serenity of perfect knowledge. And while there was much about the institution that neither he nor the rest of us could understand, yet we had him to

thank for introducing us to some truly extraordinary displays.

Unquestionably, the museum was one of the things best worth seeing in all Atlantis. Not only were the contents vivid and remarkable beyond description, but the building itself was a never-failing source of wonder. The sides and roof were of glass, and on the lower levels the walls were colorless and transparent, so that passers-by could feast their eyes on the more conspicuous displays, just as on earth the passers-by may gaze into the shop windows. But above the first story the glass was no longer crystal-clear, but was frosted and tinted to the semblance of clouds driven across a pale blue sky; and over those clouds and down from the enormous rounded dome a dim rainbow seemed to reach, spreading a web that varied in hue and texture with every step one took and every variation in the luster of the searchlights that shone faintly from above.

To glance at this superb building, one would never have guessed what queer objects it concealed. For my own part, I was simply astounded—astounded at the beauty of some exhibits, at the strangeness and ghastliness of others. The department of science and inventions (to select merely at random) was a source of bewilderment, for it showed the oddest contrivances I had ever beheld—machines for preventing earthquakes, machines for regulating the undersea temperature, machines for detecting and isolating noxious bacteria, machines for transforming iron into copper or tin into lead, machines for boring through the ground as a submarine bores through the water.

But what particularly interested me was the historical department. I shall never forget my first visit to it; it was one of the most surprising experiences of my life. Imagine, for example, a glass case that contained nothing but the fragment of a brick wall, a perfectly commonplace wall of red brick!—and imagine reading that this was a substance employed for building purposes in the days before the *Æsthetic Renaissance*! Or, again, picture yourself in contact with half a dozen gold coins, larger than silver dollars and each worth several days' wages, yet left unguarded where any one might seize them!—and fancy reading that these bits of metal had once been considered valuable and had even been contended for and hoarded! Or, to take still another illustration, conceive of one's surprise at seeing a carefully treasured speck of coal, and being informed that this was used for fuel in the days before intra-atomic energy; or paint for yourself the shock of coming across a case of fine jewelry, of rings, earrings, brooches, bracelets, and the like, only to find them represented as typical of primitive taste!

BUT while all the historical department proved most diverting to me, there was one section that interested me more than all the rest. This was known as the "Hall of Horrors." Once having observed the title, I was eager to explore the department in detail—and I was not to be disappointed. Somehow, there was something about the "Hall of Horrors" that seemed familiar, even though a placard at the entrance assured one that all the exhibits had been preserved from a remote antiquity. Thus, the first thing that I noted was a gas masque said to date from the third century B. S., but looking as if it might have been useful in the present World War. Beside the gas masque was a steel helmet reported to be from the fourth century B. S.; yet, had it not been for the card identifying it, I might have suspected it of being taken from the Germans this very year.

This suspicion, however, would not have applied to the other military implements ranged about the room; most of them were so crude of design as to make me positively smile. Even as I write this, I can recapture the mood of exultation I felt at the proof of our own superiority: the rifles of the second century B. S. were so puny-looking and feeble as to appear worse than primitive, and the bayonets were fully half a foot shorter than our own; the machine guns of the first century B. S. had obviously not half the killing capacity of ours, and the cannon were not constructed for long distance firing; while the conspicuous absence of the armored "tank," the hand grenade and "liquid fire," showed that the ancient Atlanteans would have had much to learn from the sanguinary experts of our own day.

From the "Hall of Horrors" Stranahan conducted us into another and scarcely less interesting department that was apparently nameless, since its miscellany of ancient oddities would have defied classification. "Here's where you'll feel at home," grunted our guide, as with a gesture of welcome he preceded us through the doorway. But his remark had been poorly chosen. We did not feel in the least at home. In fact, I had never had a more distinct reminder of my exile than when I gazed at great brick and iron chimneys towering within glass cases, and catalogued as typical of "The Age of Steel and Fire"; and it made me almost homesick to see pictures of long-vanished cities wrapped in great clouds of smoke and soot, and described succinctly as "Representative of the Tubercular Era in Old Atlantis." But much more surprising to me were the huge ancient furnaces, resurrected in detail, with puppet stokers in the act of pitching the coal into the giant flames. An explanatory card naively declared that "These were once considered necessary evils, not only for industrial reasons, but because the Submergence had not yet made possible the automatic regulation of the weather."

But an apparently insignificant object in the same department aroused far greater interest among my companions. Carefully guarded under a glass cover, where it had evidently undergone some special process of preservation, was a flat, little rectangle of some shriveled brownish substance, which upon close scrutiny I took to be tobacco!

That my guess had been correct was demonstrated by a placard that accompanied the exhibit: "This is a fragment of a narcotic imported into old Atlantis from across the western ocean. It found high favor at one time among the women of the country, and to a lesser extent among the men, although its use was considered a mark of effeminacy. There were several common ways of absorbing this drug, the most popular being to ignite it and suck the smoke into the lungs by means of a little twisted tube. Happily, this disgusting habit has long ago disappeared, and the elimination of this plant at the time of the Good Destruction is not the least of the benefits conferred by Agripides."

I am afraid that few of my companions agreed with the latter statement. They cast longing glances in the direction of the tobacco; and, had it not been safely guarded beneath glass, its career would surely have ended then and there.

With the memory of the tobacco still ranking in our minds, we were escorted into what was known as the "Department of Human Evolution." Here was depicted the rise of man from the lowest savage state to the height of present-day Atlantis. A series of skeletons indicated the gradual transformation

from a broad-boned, ape-like thing to a big-skulled modern—and, to my great surprise, the large cranial capacity was represented as belonging almost exclusively to the aboriginal and Post-Submergence eras!

WHILE I was wondering why this should be, I chanced to overhear the words of a sagacious-looking bearded man, who accompanied a party of smooth-faced youths, evidently as their tutor. "Before the Submergence," he was saying, "we were civilized in a rude sort of way, and yet were not intelligent. That is to say, we were not intelligent as a people, for only one man in a hundred possessed any understanding of civilization; and it was that one in a hundred, or perhaps one in a thousand, who accomplished all the changes in science, art and culture. To-day, however, every normal man is intelligent enough to be more than the dead lumber of civilization. You will observe this skull here"—the speaker paused, and pointed to one of the most ancient of the group—"this is the fossil of a paleolithic pre-Atlantean, who inhabited our island forty-five or fifty thousands years ago. You can see for yourselves how much higher and ampler the skull is than that of your own ancestor of thirty-two hundred years ago, although of course the latter represented the world's most advanced civilization. Fortunately, our intellectual decline was counteracted by the vigorous measures of Agripides and his successors, and we can now boast of being on the same high mental plane as the men of fifty thousand years ago. . . ."

The speaker withdrew with his students toward a further exhibit, and I could catch no more of what he said. But I had heard quite enough, for it seemed to me that his words were not to be taken seriously. And I was more interested in browsing about the gallery than in listening to his pointless remarks—particularly since I had chanced to set eyes on some arresting tables of statistics. These figures, which dated back more than three thousand years, showed how the rise in the appreciation of beauty had been almost simultaneous with the growth of intellect; how the mental advance and the decline of crime seemed likewise to be related phenomena; how the general measure of happiness, as indicated by the absence of nervous disorders, mental aberrations and suicides, had been incalculably increased since the intellectual revival.

Having read to the end of the statistics, I passed with my companions down several long corridors to the art departments, where some of the more notable contemporary paintings and statues were placed on exhibition along with a multitude of classic works. But if I were to dwell upon the contents of these galleries, beyond saying that its art was in that same exquisite and original style I had already observed, I should have to add chapters to my story; and, likewise, I should find my narrative interminable if I were to describe the other exhibits: the natural history department, with specimens of the flora and fauna of old Atlantis, the paleo-botanical department with life-like restorations of long-extinct tree-ferns and gigantic palms, the sociological-historical departments, with representations of scenes in prisons, poorhouses, orphanages, and insane asylums, all of which were declared to have been "herding places of the days when unfortunates were so plentiful that they had to be dealt with by the pack, instead of, as at present, being consigned individually to the care of those sympathetic men and women who make social work their service for the State."

But while the sheer abundance of the exhibits makes

it impossible to describe them all, there is one that I must not fail to mention, since in some ways it was the most remarkable in the museum. We had just entered the section ambiguously known as "Curiosities, Freaks and Monstrosities," when Stranahan, with an odd twinkling expression, warned us to be ready for a surprise. And, certainly, he warned us with good reason! As we glanced toward the further wall, we were shocked by sight of something dazzlingly familiar—so very familiar, indeed, that several of us uttered little cries of amazement. Neatly arranged behind a glass case, flattened against the rear panels so as to afford a better view, were dozens of well known blue uniforms! Among them, from the Ensign's stripes, I recognized my own; and among them, also, was the decorated uniform of the Captain! And above them, on a large-lettered placard, appeared the statement that these were the clothes worn by the only aliens to enter Atlantis since the Submergence, and that they were interesting as showing what grotesque and unsightly garments were fashionable in the upper world!

CHAPTER XXVII

The Warning of the Waters

ALTHOUGH at times during my first months in Atlantis I may have felt out of place and wished that the waters would open above me and bear me back to my own land, yet my longings were never mixed with misgivings and my regrets never tinged with fears. Even in my most pessimistic moments, I had no doubt but that the Sunken World was secure; that no menace to life or tranquility lurked in its well-ordered depths; that I might live out my days unmolested and in a peaceful routine. Hence I was all the more shocked at discovery of that peril which was to give Atlantis the aspect of a beleaguered city, and to overcast its beauty with foreboding and horror.

I had been in Atlantis over a year when the crisis occurred. It was a crisis as startling and unexpected as the flaming of a meteor out of a calm sky; and yet, had we but known it, it had been preparing its way insidiously during the days of fancied safety, like some mortal disease that burrows through tissues which are apparently sound. And, like such a disease, it might have been checked had it only been discovered in time.

I remember that one night, after many onerous hours devoted to my "History of the Upper World," I slept but poorly, with an intermittent slumber disturbed by nightmares of huge towers crashing to destruction. And during the wakeful intervals my thoughts framed other nightmares, and I was agitated by a vague alarm and excitement, though I could not understand why. Not until much later did it occur to me that some telepathic force, akin to the magnetic will power of the Atlanteans, may have conveyed to me the deep unrest that surcharged the atmosphere.

But whether or not this explanation be valid, I know that in the morning, when I had dressed and stood in my roof-bedroom gazing down into the streets, I became acutely conscious that something was wrong. Every few minutes a native or group of natives could be seen rushing by at a speed I had never before observed among the unhurried Atlanteans; and it seemed to me that their faces were convulsed as though with pain or fear; while the voices occasionally borne up to me had the nervousness, almost the hysteria, of men in a panic.

What could have happened? I wondered. Had the Atlanteans all suddenly gone mad? Or were they facing an insurrection or a civil war? Or had the government perhaps been overthrown by a band of insurgents? Or had there been an earthquake through which I had somehow slept? Or was there an invasion from the upper world, and had some of our countrymen, seeking for clues of the lost X-111, discovered the Sunken World and entered?

All these possibilities, as I turned them over in my mind, seemed so fantastic that I had to discard them. Yet it still filled me with apprehension to observe the natives scurrying about the streets—apprehension that was to be speedily justified.

I WAS just preparing to go out and investigate when there came an excited rapping at my door. Unable to imagine who might be seeking me at this early hour, I cried out sharply, "Come in!"; and the door swung abruptly open to admit—Captain Gavison!

He was far from his composed and normal self. His pale blue costume was all ruffled, and had been flung over his shoulders as though in great haste; his long hair hung dishevelled over his narrow bronzed brow; his face looked all hot and sweaty; his gray eyes burned and sparkled with a vague distress.

He did not wait for a formal greeting. "Have you—have you heard the news?" he gasped, as he strode into the room.

I confessed that I had heard nothing.

"Don't see how you could help hearing!" he snapped, and began to pace slowly about the floor, with brow wrinkled in bitter thought.

"What news?" I demanded. "Just what have you heard?"

"One of the natives told me strange things last night," he confided, as he continued his restless perambulations about the room. "I haven't slept a wink, not a wink!"

"What strange things? We're not going to be sent back home, are we?" I inquired, with an abortive effort to be facetious.

"We'll be sent to a worse place!" he growled, bristling almost into his old military manner. "The glass wall has been cracked!"

"The glass wall cracked?" I cried, stupidly, stunned by the terror of the words.

"Yes, the glass wall has been cracked," the Captain affirmed, in a more matter-of-fact manner. "One of the patrol boats discovered the damage late yesterday afternoon. There's a dangerous fracture near the entrance of the Salty River."

For reply I could only groan. The glass wall of Atlantis cracked!—the whole Atlantic Ocean bearing down upon the Sunken World! Too well I understood what that meant, too well to require comment! And in that first moment of horrible realization I had visions of torrents pouring through a gap in the wall, flooding over the streets and temples and highest towers of the land!

"But how—how under heaven did it happen?" I burst forth, when I had half recovered from the first staggering blow.

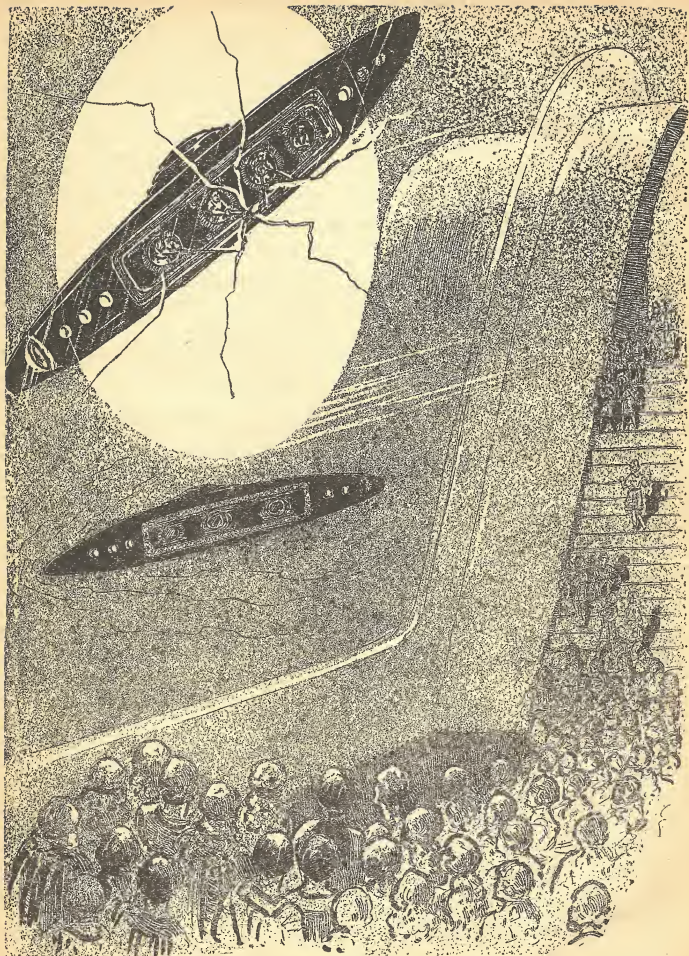
"That is not hard to say," he declared, slowly and in measured tones. "At least, there are suspicions—"

"Suspicions!" I demanded.

"Suspicions that you and I and the rest of us are to blame."

"But how is that possible?"

"It's possible, all right. It all happened before we got here. The X-111, caught in the whirlpool outside the Salty River, was hurled by the force of the



It was only by degrees that I made out its features, and saw what resembled an enormous piece of cracked crockery. From an amorphous central blur several feet across, great seams and fissures ran in different directions with long, spidery arms . . . one of the ships pressed itself against the wall, after which the port hole was opened and the men poured cement into the cracks.

waters against the glass wall, probably striking with its steel prow, which, as you know, was built for ramming foes. The wall, luckily, was too stout to be shattered; but it was cracked, and the crack must have been growing all this time without being noticed."

"Merciful gods!" I cried. "Then if—if anything happens to Atlantis; it will be all on account of us!"

Before Gavison had had time to reply, there came another rapping at the door. And, hardly waiting for my summons, a wild-eyed Xanocles burst in. Like my other visitor, he did not waste time on greetings. "You—do you know?" he faltered, with a lack of self-command most unusual in him.

Solemnly we assured him that we knew.

Without further delay we plunged into the subject that had brought him to us. "Maybe you'd like to go and see for yourselves?" he suggested.

"But how can we see for ourselves?" I asked.

"The government—that is to say, the High Chief Adviser—has ordered the intra-atomic river boats put at the people's disposal. Seven of them are now plying back and forth, bearing thousands to the glass wall. The Adviser thinks the people should see for themselves just what has happened."

"Very well then, let's go," decided the Captain.

Without another word the three of us set out together. In silence we strode down the long avenue that meandered toward the river. And as we sped along we encountered dozens of the natives, all of them in as great a hurry as we; and all had faces flushed and excited, or fearful and drawn, or pale as though with apprehension.

UPON arriving at the piers, we found that hundreds of Atlanteans had preceded us, most of them so transformed that I could hardly recognize them as citizens of the Sunken World; for they were chattering wildly, or pacing distractedly back and forth, or uttering half-hysterical exclamations; and one or two were mumbling and muttering to themselves, or moving their lips silently in what might have been prayer. But they did not fail to notice our arrival. Angry exclamations broke forth at sight of us, and several of the men and women withdrew visibly from us; and, in my surprise, I did not know whether to ascribe their hostility to the unpopularity of Xanocles or to the part that Gavison and I had played as unconscious agents of disaster.

To calm the excited multitude, a vigorous-looking young man ventured to raise his voice, and proclaim, "Friends, there is still no reason for alarm. We do not yet know how serious the damage may be, but the glass wall still holds; not a drop of water has broken through. . . . There is reason to believe that the break will be speedily repaired, and that we will go on living as happily as ever. . . ."

These words, I was glad to see, had a soothing effect upon the crowd. Yet I was relieved when at last the boat hove into view, a slender affair as long as the longest river vessel, but not more than twenty-five feet from rail to rail. I did not then give any attention to its details, though I did note how low-lying it was, with but one visible deck, one small cabin and no smokestack or mast. But after it had drawn up to the pier and the gangplank was flung down, I wasted no time about boarding it with my two companions. Benches and chairs were strewn liberally about the deck, sufficient to accommodate the entire crowd; and we had hardly taken seats when the boat began to shiver and throb, and we started off with the velocity of an express train.

So rapidly did we move that in less than an hour we were approaching the head of the Salty River. And during the interval I only once ventured to break the moody solitude of my own thoughts.

"When did you find out about all this?" I asked Xanocles, who like the rest of us seemed to be absorbed in bitter reveries.

"Last night," he returned, in an abstracted manner. "I chanced to be in the Hall of Public Enlightenment, and heard the news over the Autophone."

"The Autophone?" I demanded.

"Well, naturally, you wouldn't know what that is," explained Xanocles. "We get our ordinary news by wireless telegraph, of course, and it is then reported by speakers at the various public meeting places. But the Autophone is more effective, and is used only on rare and important occasions. It operates instantaneously, and consists of a tube and electrical attachment, enabling one to hear a speaker miles away."

"I understand," said I.

And with that we lapsed again into silence, a silence shared by all the hundreds of passengers. For now that they had actually embarked upon the voyage, their excitement seemed to have died down to a mood of solemn waiting, a tense and painful waiting all too apparent in the rigid, staring faces of the men and the women's pale cheeks and frightened eyes.

It was with relief that at length I saw the river growing white and agitated ahead of us, and knew that we were not far from the valve where the torrents were hurled in from the sea. Yet I was filled with impatience before we swerved finally into a little side canal and our boat came to a landing before a long granite dock whence a sister ship was just leaving. I need hardly state that I lost no time in stepping across the gangplank, as soon as the crowded state of the deck permitted; and though we were still three or four miles from the glass wall, I was thankful to be able to walk the distance.

TO watch my two companions and myself set out along the clay footpath toward the wall, one might have thought that we were athletes training for a race. But if we moved rapidly, we were in no way exceptional, for there were scores who easily kept pace with us.

For many minutes we hastened parallel to the Salty River. We passed the long, white rapids; we passed the spot where the gigantic jet of water shot thundering out of the pipe-like valve; we saw the wall itself sloping down before us, and near the wall we could make out a long, black mass which ultimately resolved itself into a multitude of humans.

This multitude, as we drew near, showed itself to be in a wildly agitated condition. Men and women were pacing frantically to and fro, swarming and squirming like worms or ants; some were gesticulating vehemently, some speaking in high-pitched tones audible from afar, some merely standing petrified like men dealt a blow too great to bear.

Yet, as we took our places among them, we could observe nothing that gave cause for alarm. To our right loomed the elongated, steel gray valve, a great tube as high as a three-story building, which narrowed as it approached the wall, and passed through it on a level with the ground. And just before us sloped the wall itself, now roped off so that we could not come within a stone's throw, but apparently still the same smooth, dark greenish barrier I had viewed months before. No sign of any break or crack was visible, and it was almost with disappointment that I noticed how flawless it seemed.

But while I stood there watching I heard a faint swishing sound, like the lapping of sea-waves against the rocks. I may have been mistaken, for amid the chattering and shouting of the mob and the distant roaring waters from the valve, it was difficult to be sure just what one heard. But Gavison and Xanocles seemed to note that same ominous noise, and both paused to listen, while the anxious expression on their faces did not relieve my misgivings. "It's the water working through the inner layers of the glass," I thought I heard Xanocles remark; but here again I could not be sure, for even as he spoke a tumult of shouts burst forth, and I turned in sudden fright to see what was the matter.

This time I did not have long to wait. On one of the great roof-supporting stone columns a search-light had been mounted; and I observed that it was slowly swinging round, casting a piercing illumination upon the wall from a bright, yellow eye glaring like the headlight of a locomotive. For a moment it shook and wavered as if it could not find a focus; then it became rigid and still, and a circle of the wall, many yards across, stood out in brilliant relief.

Instantly the people began to press forward. So excited were they that for a moment I almost lost touch with Gavison and Xanocles, and could catch no glimpse of the illuminated patch of wall. And at the same time shrill cries of terror and dismay broke forth. A man just by my rear groaned as if in pain; a woman gave a half suppressed sob; somewhere from the rear came a hysterical wailing. Then, when the circle in the wall again became visible, I was wedged in so tightly that I scarcely gave it any attention. It was only by degrees that I made out its features, and saw what resembled an enormous piece of cracked crockery. From an amorphous central blur several feet across, great seams and fissures ran in a hundred directions, with long, spidery arms that reached out like the roots of a tree, gradually growing thinner till they vanished in vacancy. It seemed a miracle that the water had not already burst through, for each of the scores of diverging cracks were rods long and must have been many feet deep.

I DO not know how long I stood staring blankly at that tragic break in the glass. I was as one divested of power of thought or movement; I merely hovered there transfixed, listening to the muttering and sighing of the multitude. Strangely enough, it did not occur to me to ask whether the damage could be repaired; it was as though I had known all the while that it was beyond remedy . . . and for the moment my attitude was strangely detached, almost impersonal, as though I were the external witness of melancholy and inexorable things. . . .

Yet it was a highly personal thought that startled me back to myself. Somehow, out of some dim subconscious depth, there swept across my mind the vision of two bright, blue eyes—and, with that vision, acute fear seized me, and longing, and despair. That Atlantis should be in danger was fearful enough—but that Aelios should be imperiled was a thought almost too terrible for belief. And, accompanying that first wild stab of alarm for her, there came a sharp desire to see her, to be with her, to speak with her now; and, hopeful that she might be somewhere in this crowd, I began to search all about me, and then to thread my way at random through the dense ranks of people, scanning all the faces in my anxiety, until Gavison and Xanocles, following me with difficulty, began to ask irrelevantly whether the cracks were in the wall or in my head.

But not Aelios was to be seen; and at last I was forced reluctantly to abandon the quest. A dull and settled sadness had fallen over me; and, depressed for no reason that I would have acknowledged, I expressed my purpose of returning at once to Archeon, saying that I had already seen everything there was to be seen.

"But you haven't seen a thing yet," demurred Xanocles, who seemed determined that I should remain. "The submersible repair ships have not yet arrived—and when they come, they should be a sight worth watching."

And he slipped his arm about mine, and drew me with him toward the wall, while I still protested that it would be better for me to return to Archeon.

No doubt in the end I should have had my way, had not another hubbub arisen to distract my attention. Once more the thousands of voices were lifted in excitement; but this time a note of joy was manifest, and even seemed to predominate. At the same time, many hands pointed eagerly toward the illuminated circle in the glass; and from just behind me I heard a thankful murmur that sounded encouragingly like "The repair ships (!) They're here! They're here!"

Indeed, the repair ships had arrived. Even through the darkest sections of the wall, half a dozen faintly phosphorescent cigar-shaped forms were dimly apparent. They were all rather small, scarcely more than a third of the size of the X-111; but they seemed to be exceedingly agile, and were darting lithely back and forth like great fishes, or else were whirling or pirouetting or standing almost on end, as though stricken with giddiness and unable to control their movements.

"They're having the devil's own time!" muttered Xanocles, as he stood watching. "That's the worst danger-spot in all the ocean, for the waters are constantly in a whirlpool because of the torrents emptied into the Salty River. But our men are brave, and somehow they'll manage it."

"But how can they set about it?" I inquired, unable to imagine any way of making repairs.

"It's far from easy, but it can be done," continued Xanocles. "One of the ships will have to press itself against the wall, so closely that there is no space between. Once all water has been excluded between the vessel and the wall, you understand, the pressure on the ocean side will keep the ship in place. And after the ship is in the proper position, a porthole will be opened, and through this the men will pour cement into the crack."

Even as Xanocles explained, an anchor was dropped from one of the ships into the rocky sea bottom; and the vessel, having steadied itself, began to drift slowly toward the wall, so that at length its side was pressed tightly against the cracked glass. Then a little circle of light seemed suddenly to open on the ship's side; and in that circle I could make out the rigid, determined faces of half a dozen men, while in their hands I could observe a variety of strange rods, tubes, and lantern-like contrivances.

Pessimistic as I had been before, I could not but feel a burst of hope when I watched the capable, courageous way in which these men set to work. And evidently the waiting throng had become hopeful too, for murmurs of admiration and approval were repeatedly on their lips; and as they saw tube after tube of cement poured skillfully into the cracks, they became almost mad with relief; and some began to clap their hands and caper childishly, and some signed in thanksgiving, and some wept silently, for, after all, Atlantis seemed to have been saved!

Then, with the suddenness of a thunderbolt, all their hopes were dashed out. So swiftly did disaster descend that none had a chance to say how or whence it came—but it was disaster complete and irretrievable. Perhaps it was that the anchor-chain holding the submarine had snapped, or that some water had seeped in from the side of the vessel and the glass wall. At all events, the submarine was plainly visible one moment, the men pumping the viscid cement through long tubes to the very extremities of the crack; and the next moment there was only a dim shadow flitting away into a watery obscurity.

For an instant there was an awed silence. Then, as comprehension dawned upon the crowd, a convulsive shudder swept it through and through, and a howl of horror and dismay rang forth. Men glanced askance at their neighbors, blank terror gaping from their eyes; and all at once, as by a common impulse, hundreds pressed confusedly toward the wall, as though they might succor thus those unfortunates lost in the briny wastes. But many, conscious of the futility of all action, sadly remained in their places, and mutely bowed their heads—a tribute of respect for the drowned.

CHAPTER XXVIII

The Waters Retreat

THE eight days that followed the discovery of the crack were among the most harrowing I had every spent. Indeed, they were among the most harrowing that any resident of Atlantis had ever spent. That the peril was acute became more and more apparent as the days went by and the damage was not repaired—the submarine disaster which I had witnessed was but the precursor to other and not less frightful disasters. Vessel after vessel battled with the swirling waters in the effort to force itself against the wall and cement the crack; and vessel after vessel was shaken away like a twig by the fury of the maelstrom. Sometimes, fortunately, the portholes were shut in time and the crew managed to save their lives; but on other occasions the maddened waters snatched their prey; and before a week had gone by Atlantis was mourning for seven lost parties of rescuers.

All the country was now in a tumult, I might almost say in a delirium. The regular currents of life had stopped short; men no longer went about their daily duties; the libraries and art galleries were deserted; the young were without tutors, the governmental departments without clerks; and the cities would have been without bread, had it not been for the drastic orders of the High Chief Adviser. Citizens who once had been amply occupied would loiter aimlessly about the streets, or would flock to the Hall of Public Enlightenment to hear the latest report over the Auto-phone; or else they would pace nervously along the colonnades, or stand discussing in small groups, nerve-racked and bewildered as men under sentence of death. Though I never heard them mention the fear that must have been uppermost in their minds, yet their pale faces and shuddery manner gave proof of the dread that was preying upon them; and my former shipmates and I had reason to know how overmastering was their terror, for that aversion I had already noted was deepening, and the people would glance at us with hostility and even accusation in their eyes, looking mute reproach at us, as though our coming had been responsible (as indeed it had been) for the threatened end of their world.

Every morning five or six of the little intra-atomic

submarines would leave Atlantis through the valve in the eastern wall, where the waters of the Salty River were forced back into the sea. And in the evening (if they survived till evening) they would return through the valve in the western wall, where the waters of the Salty River found entrance. In the interval, their occupants would work as courageously as I had ever known men to work, warring against odds that were apparently insurmountable; while all Atlantis would stand watching, or waiting at the Auto-phone for news of their progress. It seemed wrongful to my comrades and me that these men, brave and willing as they were, should risk their lives to repair an injury which we had caused; and so at Captain Gavison's suggestion several of us volunteered to join the rescuing forces. But the High Chief Adviser, although expressing his gratitude, refused our offer in terms that could admit of no reply; for the repairing crews, as he explained, consisted of skilled mechanics especially trained for their duties and therefore irreplaceable.

Fortunately, our assistance was not necessary. On the eighth day, the officials in charge of the repairs decided upon a change of tactics; and then it was that the "Acrola," a specially equipped submarine provided with five anchors and an extra battery of intra-atomic engines, made its way out of the Salty River and around the glass dome to the scene of the damage. Truly, it was time that something desperate was done. For, according to official measurements, the crack had expanded between nine and ten inches since its detection. Thanks to its unusual powers of resistance, however, the "Acrola" withstood the buffeting of the waters and remained pressed against the wall while Captain Thermandos and his crew pumped the cement into the innumerable fissures. Except for the extraordinary courage of the men, it is probable that they too would have failed, for the task occupied them for more than six hours, any moment of which might have been their last; and they not only had to fill the cracks, but had to hold to their post till the cement had begun to harden and was no longer in danger of being washed away.

But the notable fact is that they succeeded. Though they were worn and haggard from their exertions, yet they had succeeded magnificently. They had saved Atlantis; After all, the flood-gates would not burst!—the devouring waters would never race along the streets and colonnades; the people might return calmly to their work, certain that tomorrow would bring no new menace.

SUCH, at least, was the general impression. And so great was the public relief that the pendulum swung violently from a crisis of despair to an extreme of joy. Like men newly awakened from a nightmare, the Atlanteans refused to believe that the peril had not been utterly wiped away; and so great was the force of the reaction, so sudden the snapping of the tension, that for a while their emotions controlled their heads, and their desire to feel safe became converted into a conviction that they were safe. Later, many of them were to awaken from their self-hypnosis; but during the celebration that followed the repairs, the people almost without exception acted as if convinced of their rescue; and all the speakers at the great public gatherings referred in positive terms to the deliverance of Atlantis; and the songs that were sung were songs of thanksgiving, as of triumphant escape from a foe; and the games and dances and festive processions were those of a people wild with joy of new-won salvation.

Yet even at the time there was at least one dissent-

ing voice. Like most dissenting voices at a moment of popular emotion, it was but little heard, and then was heard contemptuously; yet it was often to be remembered in later days, when the occasion called for little beyond regret.

Among the seven governmental experts sent to investigate the repairs and report on their soundness, there was one who strenuously challenged the views of his colleagues. While the other six agreed that the damage had been remedied beyond possibility of a further disturbance, the seventh (Peliades by name) brought in a vigorous minority report in which he contended that the relief was only temporary.

His plea, as I remember it, ran somewhat as follows:

"For four or five years—possibly for ten—the repairs will prove adequate; but after that period the damage will re-appear in a much more aggravated form than before. For the cement constitutes a foreign element in the glass, and produces an abnormal bulge, so placing an exceptional strain upon those portions which are still sound. For a while the wall may be able to endure the strain, but in the course of time the additional tension will become too great for the brittle material of the wall to resist; and first small cracks will appear, and then larger, growing by inches and by fractions of inches, until the break spreads towards the surface, and the tremendous pressure of the ocean shatters the remaining barrier. This effect, of course, will take years before it begins to be noticeable; but when finally it becomes apparent, the crack will have spread so far that only heroic measures will be able to save Atlantis.

"The remedy, therefore, is to undertake the immediate erection of a new glass bulwark against the affected portion of the wall. Prodigious though this effort will necessarily be, we will probably be able to complete the work in time. But unless we do complete it, we will find ourselves within a hair's breadth of catastrophe."

Unfortunately—most unfortunately, in view of what ensued—Peliades' warning was scarcely heeded. In some quarters he was denounced as a crank, a mad alarmist; in other quarters he was openly laughed at, or derided as the victim of hysteria; while the majority paid no attention to him at all. Least sympathetic of his hearers were his fellow specialists; for these, in response to an inquiry by the High Chief Adviser, testified at length as to the scientific unsoundness of Peliades' theories, and disproved his views to their own satisfaction and that of the people.

And so the dissenter's motions were quietly tabled, and Atlantis returned to its normal duties with confidence in the future.

CHAPTER XXIX

The Party of Emergence

ALTHOUGH all Atlantis resumed its normal aspect soon after the wall had been repaired, things were never again to be quite as before. It was as though there were some unseen fissure in the life of the Sunken World as well as in its glass boundary; as though the people realized, subconsciously, that they hovered on the rim of a smoldering volcano. Something seemed to be lacking that had been there before, perhaps because something was present that had never been there before; and the corrosive effects of fear, injected for the first time during all the centuries of the Submergence, seemed to dissipate the charmed tranquility of Atlantis and to suggest that inimical

and even treacherous forces lurked beyond the marble fountains and palaces and the weird green-golden dome.

But the one tangible result of the discovery of the crack was the rise of the Party of Emergence. This despised minority group, whose very name had been a phrase of contempt, now burst into a prominence as surprising to its members as to the people as a whole, and for the first time in history threatened to become a power in Atlantean politics. Perhaps it was that there were thousands who, beset by a secret dread, looked to the Party of Emergence as their only salvation; perhaps it was merely that they had been shocked into a more liberal-minded attitude, and could view the policy of Emergence with wide-open eyes. At all events, a host of disciples flocked voluntarily to the Emergence banners; and among these were many persons of influence and position, including Peliades, the engineer who had declared the wall unsound, and Chorendos, the Local Adviser of Archeon.

And now began a heated and aggressive campaign, conducted incessantly and not without success in the Hall of Public Enlightenment of every town and village in Atlantis—a campaign that threatened to develop into a life-or-death struggle between the regenerated Emergence Party and the more venerable Submergence group. It happened that I myself took an active, if minor part in that contest; and it also happened that the entire Upper World Club was implicated, for we all realized that the cause of Emergence offered us our only opportunity of returning to the upper world.

Innumerable were the meetings that we attended, and innumerable the pleas that we made. To give a complete account of all our activities would be impossible, even if I could recall them all; and so I will have to confine myself to describing a particular meeting, which stands forth in my mind as typical.

One afternoon, many months after the crack in the wall has been sealed, Xanoces and I found ourselves preparing for a strenuous session at the Hall of Public Enlightenment. It had been rumored that the day's meeting was to be unusually interesting, and Xanoces and I were secretly determined to make it so; hence, when we arrived at the sapphire and amber theatre and found almost all the seats occupied, we felt that we had every reason to congratulate ourselves.

We took chairs in the rear, and quietly awaited our turn. A discussion was in progress regarding the award of honor to be made to a certain lyric poet. (I do not know quite what the issue was, for I did not listen attentively.) But everyone understood that this was not to be the topic of the day; and after the question had been settled, a momentary hush came over the audience and many pairs of eyes were bent toward us inquiringly.

Then it was that Xanoces arose. At a gesture from that same broad-browed elderly woman who had presided when Gavison and his crew had been brought to trial long before, my friend stepped out into the aisle and down to the central platform or stage, while all eyes followed him intently and a speechless lull dominated that great assemblage.

"Fellow citizens," he said, not taking time even for an instant's pause after reaching the foot of the stairs, "I am here to-day to make one of the most momentous proposals ever presented since Agripides pleaded for the Submergence. But it is not a proposal that has never been put forth before; it is merely one that has never been endorsed. It has been, indeed, at the very backbone of the Party of Emergence, and will continue to be argued and preached until it meets

with that success which it merits. For it is impossible, my friends, that Atlantis should retain its age-old isolation; modern progress makes such backwardness inconceivable, as the arrival of thirty-nine men from outside has demonstrated. I am certain that if Agripides himself were here now he would agree that our policies must be revised."

Here Xanocles paused as if for emphasis; but the audience remained intently silent, and with increased forcefulness he continued, "The question of emigration, my friends, is one of the most important that can confront any land. Never in the last three thousand years has Atlantis had an adequate law on this subject. Our prohibition of emigration has been a form of intolerance unworthy of the high traditions of our people; and free emigration, if forbidden by the arbitrary conventions of society, is justified by the mandates of nature and the normal human craving for romance and adventure.

"Therefore I suggest that the fundamental law of Atlantis be modified. But for the sake of those who fear to be too radical, I recommend that we proceed cautiously at first; let us begin by allowing three or four of our people to visit the upper world; and let these, having made their investigations, return with their reports, so that then, on the basis of definite knowledge, we may decide on the advantage of further emergence."

"N O, no, no!" rang forth half a dozen voices in sharp disapproval; and, as Xanocles gracefully resigned the floor, one of the dissenters—a tall, stooped man with sawtooth face, fringed with a white beard—stepped down to express his views.

"Citizens of Atlantis," he declared, in a voice surprisingly resonant and vigorous for one of his age, "I have lived long enough to follow the debates of a hundred years, but never have I heard such folly as has just been advised. Under the influence of Agripides, Atlantis has been beautiful, and it has been happy—and what more can life give us than happiness and beauty? Would you let yourselves be stampeded by the ravings of these modernists, who would trample on every sacred thing, seeking a panicky escape from some imaginary peril, or misled by a childish lust for adventure or romance? Take an old man's word, in all the upper world there can be no romance like that spread beneath our green-glass dome, and no adventure like that of our golden-illuminated ways. Agripides was right, my friends, perhaps more marvelously right than even he could have known; for Atlantis can remain Atlantis only so long as the corrupting influence of the world is excluded; only so long as we are protected from those bickering, greedy strivings and ruinous stupidities that must beset all men on an earth, which are things too vast to control and too diversified to understand. Need I do more than to remind you that already the first shock of contact with the upper world has almost shattered the foundations of Atlantis, and left us momentarily in acute danger and fear?"

And the old man ceased, and stalked majestically back to his seat, while the nods and murmurs of approval showed how favorably he had been received. Evidently the Submergence Party had scored, and scored heavily; and therefore the time seemed ripe for the address which I had prepared.

I had no difficulty in gaining the floor; and after a few remarks expressing my sympathy with the ends if not with the methods of the Submergence Party, I launched into the main body of my speech.

"You are all building without ample knowledge,"

said I. "And that must necessarily be so, for what can you have learned of the upper world? But it happens that I, thanks to some years of experience, do know a little of the upper world; and it is because of this that I venture to address you on behalf of the policy of Emergence."

I paused momentarily, to pave the way for my next point; and I observed that hundreds of pairs of eyes were straining toward me, in a silence so intense that one might have heard the proverbial pin drop.

"I shall not dwell upon the merely physical advantages of my own world," I continued. "I shall not describe its wide spaces and splendid vistas, its tree-mantled valleys and sun-burnished lakes, its uproariously white-splashed oceans and billowy mountains, dark with forest or glittering with the snow. I shall not linger over the tingling freshness of starry winter nights, the feathery softness of the spring, the enchantment of firefly-haunted glades or of the ever-shifting skies, with their fragile blue or gray or burning sunset red. I shall not discourse upon these sights, for even in the upper world they are but little noted, save by an occasional nature crank or poet.

"But what I shall strive to make plain are those advantages familiar to every thinking citizen of the earth. Let me begin, for example, by picturing the life of the typical dweller in our greatest city. Not only in his home but in his work he enjoys the benefits of the most progressive civilization ever known. To begin with, his dwelling may be of any type that accords with his means and capacity, for if he likes high places and can afford them, he may enjoy the privilege of looking down upon his neighbors from the eleventh story; or, if he prefers exercise, he may walk up to the sixth floor whenever he goes home; or, again, if he be of a sluggish disposition, he may take lodgings at street level—and all without extra charge.

"Now let me depict the daily routine of such a man. After being aroused in the morning by a wonderful little clock that is almost human in its faithfulness to habit, he slips hastily into his clothes and consumes a breakfast perhaps featured by refrigerated beefsteak grown half a world away, and by coffee mixed with the condensed milk of cows that lived far away and long ago. Having thus fortified himself against the day's exigencies, he loses no time about leaving the house; and, in company with thousands as fortunate as himself, he enters a little hole in the ground, and twenty minutes or half an hour later emerges from another and precisely similar hole five or ten miles away. But this is the least of his conveniences. After climbing from the second hole, he wedges his way into a little electric box in any of our downtown buildings, and promptly finds himself delivered opposite his office on the fifteenth or twentieth floor. He is now ready for the day's duties; and so marvelously simple is modern civilization that, no matter what those duties be, they are always the same.

"For there is only one task that seems worth while to the modern man, and that is the making of money. Just why money-making is so important is a question that I personally cannot answer; but it must be important indeed, for every one becomes involved in it, especially those who have more already than they know what to do with; and this is doubtless why modern civilization runs so smoothly, why the wheels turn so regularly in so many mills, the shafts are sunk so deeply in so many mines, the forests are cut so completely from so many mountain sides, and men continue to spread out and multiply despite battles, pestilences, labor wars, earthquakes, and explosions."

IN the latter part of my address I had rather lost control of myself, saying things I had not intended to say, things I did not exactly mean. But my enthusiasm carried me along irresistibly, and it was not until I was launched into mid-channel that I paused for a glimpse of my audience and observed the stares of amazement, the nods of incredulity and the frowns, of repulsion with which my words were received. Then suddenly I was sorry, for now I remembered how once before I had damaged my own cause by dwelling indiscreetly upon the merits of the upper world. But though I was following the wrong track I did not know how to find the right one—for unless I described our industrial and mechanical progress, what was there for me to boast about? And so, face to face with an impassable barrier, I faltered midway in my address, hastily summarized, led up to a feeble peroration, and confusedly took my seat.

As I returned to Xanocles' side, a strained silence filled the air; and the shocked and even hostile glances of the audience showed how gravely I had harmed the cause of Emergence.

But though I personally had failed, Xanocles was equal to the emergency. Springing to his feet during the momentary lull that followed my fiasco, he caught the attention of the chairwoman, and for the second time was accorded permission to address the meeting.

"Fellow citizens," he began, while the full attention of the assembled hundreds was focused upon him, "it deeply grieves me to hear of the deplorable state of affairs in the upper world. No doubt our friend has unconsciously exaggerated, for it is incredible that, after all these thousands of years, the unsubmerged races should still be so primitive as he has indicated. Yet we must accept his picture of conditions; we must reluctantly admit that our fellows on earth are still groping in the semi-savagery of the Age of Smoke and Iron, from which we Atlanteans escaped three thousand years ago.

"But does that mean that we should ignore the upper world? Does that mean that we, in the consciousness of our superiority, should not reach out a helping hand to our brothers? To forget them in their need would be unworthy of the disciples of Agripides! Indeed, it is because of the very limitations of the upper world that we must emerge!—it is because the people are so deeply in need of assistance! Let us show them the folly of their ways! Let us convert them to the wisdom of Atlantis! Let us teach them that steel and gold are but frail things after all! Let us send out our missionaries among them, and bring them the creed of Agripides! Do you not realize, fellow citizens, that such an opportunity has never before been thrust at your door? For not only may you deliver the upper world from its barbarities and teach it a true culture, but you may show its peoples how to build glass walls and submerge as we have submerged!"

In this wild vein Xanocles rambled on and on, while his hearers followed him with enthusiasm that seemed gradually to mount to the point of conviction.

Other arguments followed, which I will not weary the reader with repeating; and after all who desired it had had their say, a vote was taken on Xanocles' emergence proposal.

To our great joy, the motion carried—carried by the decisive ratio of almost two to one! The moment of triumph, however, had not yet arrived; for, before the measure could become operative, it had to be approved by a referendum of all the Atlanteans.

That referendum, according to the law, could not be held for at least thirty days, the interval being

considered necessary for discussion. Hence there ensued a most exciting thirty days for Xanocles and myself, as well as for all members of the parties of Emergence and Submergence. Never in the past three thousand years had so fundamental an issue been brought before the people; for the first time since the Good Destruction, the basic principles of Agripides were at stake!

Since there were no newspapers in Atlantis, at least one agency of political excitement was lacking. But there were other agencies in abundance. Never—with the exception of those dreadful days following the discovery of the crack—had I seen the Atlanteans so agitated. In all the houses and meetings that I visited, the chief topic of conversation was the proposed "Emergence Act"; every one was anxious to deliver his opinion, and every one—man and woman alike—seemed to have an opinion, which he was capable of expressing in apt and pointed terms. But the desire for discussion was particularly in evidence at the great assemblies held daily at the Hall of Public Enlightenment; and it was there that Xanocles and his fellow "Debating Delegates" of the Emergence Party made some of the most forceful and eloquent pleas I had ever heard; while their rivals of the Submergence group were scarcely less fervid in appealing for the time-honored policies. These activities, I need hardly point out, were not confined to one city, but were participated in by all the eighteen cities of Atlantis; and numerous speakers from outside points would arrive to address the gatherings in Archeon, while occasionally Xanocles or some other leader would leave to speak in neighboring towns.

Not least eager among the fighters for Emergence were the thirty-nine members of the Upper World Club. Indeed, it is certain that none of the older members could have outdone us in enthusiasm or determination. For we had more than an abstract principle at stake—our entire future lay in the balance. And while I personally was not eager to return to earth just now (being detained by thought of a certain fair-haired, blue-eyed woman), yet most of my comrades were almost passionately anxious to escape, for as time went by they found themselves more and more out of place in this too-perfect land, and increasingly unable to perform the duties required of them as citizens of Atlantis.

But if they were dissatisfied with the Sunken World and incapable of making any contribution to Atlantean culture, they proved very competent when it came to helping the cause of Emergence. Few of them were sufficiently skilled in the language to speak in public (Captain Gavison was an exception, and several times expressed himself forcefully and to good effect); but they were all adepts at private electioneering; and they would stop every Atlantean they could inveigle into conversation and plead the cause of Emergence. Frequently, indeed, they did more harm than good; and I remember that Stranahan repeated my own error, and frightened away several prospective emergenceists by boastfully describing the magnitude of wars in the upper world; and once I overheard Rawson draw an involuntary cry of disgust from a hearer, when he tactlessly descanted upon the advantages of airplanes as bomb throwers. But on the whole the men were well coached by members of the Emergence party, and knew enough to confine themselves to describing the beauty of the upper world! Partly because of their aid, but chiefly by virtue of the vigorous campaign being conducted in all the four corners of Atlantis, we had hopes that our revolutionary measure was to become final law.

CHAPTER XXX
Crucial Moments

AN election in Atlantis was seldom accompanied by intense excitement. There was no registration, for all citizens were permanently enrolled with the population bureau; on election day all the men and women of voting age (which means all who had passed their High Initiation) appeared quietly at the designated polling places to cast a secret ballot, or else—if they preferred—they sent in their vote in writing two or three days earlier. The election boards then slowly counted the votes, and the fate of the measure (for laws were the only things passed on by the voters of Atlantis) was disclosed at the Hall of Public Enlightenment.

But the Emergence proposal proved an exception to the rule. Not a little agitation was apparent among the men and women thronging to the election chambers; and this agitation was heightened by the members of the Upper World Club, who used earthly political tactics by accosting the voters before they reached the polls and showering them with final arguments and pleas. It is doubtful whether these eleventh hour efforts had any effect, and, indeed, the results showed that they might have been spared; but at the time we felt that our exertions had not been in vain, and during the election and the days of suspense that followed, we remained unwarrantedly hopeful.

Then came the disillusioning blow. After three days, the election results were announced in the Hall of Public Enlightenment. Out of more than a third of a million votes cast in all Atlantis, our party had polled nearly a hundred and fifty thousand—yet had failed by many thousands to equal the Submergence total.

Even so, we were not wholly discouraged. As Xanocles pointed out, the cause of Emergence had never before been able to attract one-tenth as many voters; and we had reason to hope that we would eventually bring the majority to our side. No sooner had the news of our defeat reached us than we began to plan for further campaigns, for we were determined not to abandon the fight so long as we had breath with which to wage it.

Yet in one respect, I was already regretting my connection with the Emergence Party. My regrets, to be sure, arose from purely non-political motives, and could not make me alter my allegiance; but they were none the less deep-rooted. To my surprise and chagrin, I found that my campaigning activities were bringing me into disfavor with Aelios. As one of Agripides' staunch admirers and a devoted member of the Party of Submergence, she looked with growing disapproval upon my association with Xanocles and his kind; and during those little conferences which we had for the supposed purpose of discussing my "History of the Upper World," she would take occasion to reprove me mildly and even to suggest that my conduct savored of disloyalty.

Of course, I would plead my right as a citizen to espouse any political cause that appealed to me; but she would not gravely dissent. "Theoretically you may have the right," she would remind me, "but don't you think you are showing remarkably bad taste? Remember, you came into our land uninvited, and have been freely received as one of us, and given citizenship and all the privileges of a native. And how do you show your appreciation? By taking sides with the party that would undermine our institutions; by doing all you can to wreck the very country that succored you."

To this I would reply that I had no intention of wrecking the country; that I was trying to further its interests according to my own lights. And Aelios, while not convinced that my own lights were the right ones, would at least admit that my motives were sincere; and having reached this halfway point of agreement, we would invariably turn to less provocative subjects.

But despite her disapproval of my Emergence views, I had reason to be encouraged by her attitude toward me. I saw her, while not often, at least often enough to be assured of her friendship; and now and then I caught in her eyes a bright, warm light which intimated that what she felt might be more than friendship. Yet it may merely have been that my desires passed judgment for me, for not by a word or a gesture did she give evidence that she regarded me otherwise than as one kindly disposed human being may regard another; and the occasional hints of some gentler emotion were so rare and so fleeting that I could not be sure. And so, as best I could, I restrained my impatience, at first never seriously believing that I could aspire to her height, then gradually fanning faint hopes that remained concealed beneath the mantle of my diffidence. It was long before we even approached the subject of love; and meanwhile we would speak of impersonal things, or personal things securely buried in the past, and nothing in my words would give hint of the passion flaming to life within me, while in her words I saw the traces only of a vivid and beauty-loving mind serenely unconscious of sex.

BUT even in Atlantis it was impossible that we should continue to see one another and yet retain a mere brother-and-sister attitude. How it was with her I do not know, but I was the son of a world whose passions burn gustily and strong; and I was becoming almost painfully obsessed with the thought of her, and would be given to long fits of melancholy in her absence, while at times in her presence I would be tantalized by her passionless calm, and would feel the old sweet primitive prompting to slip my arms about her, and enfold her as one might enfold the Ultimate. But always I would restrain myself, for how be sure of the reaction of this daughter of an alien civilization? How be sure that embraces and caresses would not be repulsive to the Atlantegans? And so, though possessed by the thought of her, as by some exquisite perfume that provokes and allures, I repressed my eagerness for many, many months, awaiting that opportunity which in the end, I felt sure, time and circumstance must provide.

And in the end my patience was rewarded, and I was favored unexpectedly by one of those occasions which life, if left quietly to itself, seems usually to offer to lovers.

It was after one of my rare and delightful afternoons with Aelios, that the supreme event occurred. We had been strolling together about the city, and had gone for a moment's rest into the "Temple of the Stars," that majestic edifice in which Rawson and I had been trapped so long before. Seated on a stone bench in the darkness, we gazed awe-stricken at the spectacle above us—the whole glittering panorama of the night-skies, almost as I had beheld them so many times on earth. And as I peered up at the image of those heavens I could hardly hope to see again, a sad and reminiscent mood came over me; I could fancy myself once more on earth, and was wistful for all that earth contained; I missed the friends I had known, the sparkle of the sunshine, the magnificence

of white-throated mountains; I longed for the bluster and cannonade of tempests, the icy tingling of the snow, the splashing and foamy turbulence of the ocean. And Aelios, although she had never known these things and could scarcely imagine what they meant, was strangely responsive to my mood, and seemed even to feel my melancholy. She asked me gently about the world I had left, and how it felt to wander among the great cities of the earth, and how it felt to hear the purling of mountain brooklets or to sit on a grassy knoll with the great sun blazing in the blue above. And, remembering all that I had seen and heard before my captivity in Atlantis, I described to Aelios what my life had been, and told of my adventures and wanderings, my happy childhood and youth and early manhood; and I drew upon my imagination for gorgeous pictures of the upper world, and painted the home I had lost as little less than a Paradise.

"Ah, now I see why you've joined the Emergence Party," Aelios remarked, her face glowing dimly in the near-starlight, and her eyes soft with a kindly luster. "Of course, you must sometimes wish yourself back among those wonderful scenes you left."

"Sometimes, indeed, I am sorry," said I, in low tones and reminiscently. "Sometimes I almost wish to be again in my native land. But there are other times when I am glad, very glad to be here, and when I would not go back to my own country if I could—not if you offered me the whole world."

"And when is that?" asked Aelios. "When you are in the beautiful buildings here, or look at the exquisite statuary?"

"Yes, sometimes then," I replied. "But not only then. There are other exquisite things that make me wish to stay."

"Yes, I can understand," she declared, apparently still innocent of the trend of my remarks. "The paintings, for example, or the colonnades, or—"

"No, not only that," I interrupted. "There is something more personal, more human—something that—"

Here I hesitated, hardly able to proceed.

"You mean then, that you like the people here?" she volunteered, still with perfect candor.

"Yes, indeed I like the people!" I vowed, fervently. "And one person in particular!"

If this remark had been intended to evoke a tell-tale reply, it was to fail signally. "Oh, I am glad you are so attached to your friends!" she responded, whether innocently or with calculating cleverness I could not say, since the darkness concealed any blush that may have suffused her face.

"But don't you understand, Aelios?" I persisted. "Don't you know whom in particular I mean?"

The note of surprise in her answer was either genuine or else was born of remarkably skilful acting. "How should I know whom you mean? Am I with you often enough to know all your friends?"

She was making matters difficult for me. But, having reached this tactical position, I was determined not to surrender. "Why, Aelios," I countered, "whom should you imagine that I have for my particular friend? Whom but yourself?"

"Myself?" she repeated, in sheer astonishment. "Myself?"

FOR a moment there was silence; but this time I felt that there could be no doubt about the blush that mounted to her face. And at length she turned to me with softly smoldering eyes, and the assurance of victory entered my heart and then swiftly receded as she murmured, bashfully, "I am pleased, very much

pleased, to know you feel that way. It is a great compliment to me, and I am very proud—for nothing in Atlantis is held more precious than friendship."

"Oh, but it is not only friendship!" I remonstrated, wondering if it were possible that she still misunderstood. "It's not only friendship, Aelios! It is love!"

"Love?" she echoed, in low tones of surprise; and another long silence followed, while I waited eagerly for the words that did not come, and she averted her head so that not even the dimly glowing eyes were visible. Then, when the suspense was becoming embarrassing, I found hesitating speech, which gradually grew more fluent and assured; and all the pent-up emotions of months welled forth and forced a passionate torrent from my tongue, so vehement as to surprise even myself. I told her how immeasurably dear she had become; how she had been for me the central light of all this strange world; how she had soothed my loneliness, dispersed my despair, and given me hope and a reason for living; how my life could have meaning and beauty only if she had a share in it, while without her all things would be desolate and blank. All this and much more I poured forth in an eager rhapsody, not pausing to reflect that I was but repeating the sentiments of a million lovers; and the strength of my feelings perhaps lent wings to my commonplace words, and gave them a power that no analysis could reveal. Or perhaps it was that Atlantean lovers never expressed themselves as do lovers on earth; for even in the darkness I was aware that Aelios was listening, listening intently, listening almost with a breathless interest, as though she had never heard or imagined words such as mine.

After I had finished, she seemed still held in some spell of speechlessness. For several tense seconds, slow-dragging portentous seconds that seemed minutes long, I waited for her to break silence. But when her response came, it was in passionless tones that contrasted oddly with my emotion. With an accentuation so feeble as to resemble a whisper, she declared, "All this that you say seems strange to me, very, very strange. You speak of love, but I fear I do not understand. Perhaps love in your land is not the same as here, for I am sure that what you speak of is not what we would call love."

"And what would you call love?" I asked.

"It is something that hardly needs a name. It is like none of those momentary attachments that men and women sometimes feel. It is something that wraps one's whole being in a mighty flame, and is born chiefly of the kinship of the mind and heart; and when it comes, it need not be much spoken of, but can never be forgotten or lost."

"That's just what I feel toward you, Aelios!" I assured her, fervently.

"But I do not know if it is what I feel toward you," she returned, simply. "I do not know—I cannot yet be sure."

"But you think that perhaps—perhaps sometime—" I gaped, wild hope springing to life within me.

"Yes, perhaps sometime—I cannot say," she murmured, slowly.

But in her tones was the assurance of that which her expressed words denied; and, with the exultation of unlooked for success, I at last flung myself free of restraint, and my arms found their way about her slim, resisting form.

But somehow she slipped free of my clasp, and stood dimly outlined before me in the shadows, herself no more than a shadow in this unreal world.

"Not yet, my lover, not yet," she forbade, in gentle tones that did not show the hurt feelings I had feared.

"But when, Aelios?" I demanded, baffled, but far from discouraged. "When—when may we get married?"

"Not yet, not yet for a while—if ever," she decided. "We must wait, we must wait until we are both quite certain." She paused, then added casually, "'Besides, remember, you have a duty to perform—an all-important duty with which neither your own pleasure nor your love must interfere."

"But what after I have performed that duty? What after my work is completed? Will you then—"

"I will then be willing to listen to you again," was all she would vouchsafe. "Come, let us be going now."

And she started for the door, while I followed awkwardly, since she knew the way much better than I. And, once outside, she began speaking impersonally about the art of the colonnades and marble galleries, and seemed to have forgotten entirely the subject that had been absorbing us. But in her eyes was an unusual sparkle, and on her cheeks an unwonted glow; and after I had left her and she had gone tripping out of sight, I pursued my way thoughtfully homeward, my steps made buoyant by a hope I once would not have dared to entertain.

CHAPTER XXXI

"The History of the Upper World"

I HAD been in Atlantis two years before I had completed my "History of the Upper World." Considering the magnitude of the task, it surprises me now to remember that I finished it so quickly, for not only was it longer than three average-sized volumes, but I was retarded by writing it in an adopted tongue and by having to work exclusively from memory and without reference books other than the Atlantean dictionaries. But six or seven hours of daily application is certain to show results even though one works slowly.

It was indeed a proud day, and yet a day of many doubts, when I bore the finished manuscript to the office of the Literary Registrar. This official, assisted by a board of fifteen recognized writers and critics, passed upon all literary works submitted by the authors of Atlantis; and all books found worthy of perpetuation were published under his direction, while unstinted advice and criticism was given to promising aspirants. In the case of my own book, there could be no doubt as to publication, for not only had I been specifically directed to write it, but all Atlantis was eagerly awaiting the information it was expected to convey. None the less, it had to undergo the regular procedure of inspection by the Registrar; and, as it happened, this was more than a fruitless formality. Before the manuscript was given to the press a trained essayist was appointed to help me reconstruct the style; and, thanks to his assistance, my writing attained a dignity and polish I myself could never have supplied.

But when at last the publication of the book was ordered, I had good reason to be gratified. An edition of fifty thousand was to be issued—an edition of phenomenal size considering that the population of Atlantis was only half a million.

Naturally, I sought to know the reason for this enormous printing, and hence learned much as to book distribution in the Sunken World. Publication, like all other activities, was solely in the hands of the government; and copies of all the hundreds of books issued each year were sent as a matter of course to

every library in the land. Moreover, every citizen was permitted his choice of any fifty of the year's books, the receipt of which was considered not a privilege but a right; and men and women engaged in research work were allowed in excess of fifty if they made plain their need of the additional volumes. In the case of my own book, public interest was at such a pitch, that a large percentage of the people were certain to include it among their chosen fifty; and the first edition was therefore regarded as conservative in size rather than excessive.

So, in fact, it proved. The book was hardly off the press when orders began to pour in so rapidly that a second edition of fifty thousand had to be prepared. For it was literally true that every one was reading "The History of the Upper World"; and when I say every one, I do not mean one man out of every hundred, as might be the case were I writing on the earth; I mean that there was actually not a person of reading age who did not feel bound to acquaint himself with the contents of my book.

In consequence, I found my life taking on a tinge of unwonted excitement. The notoriety of successful authorship was mine—and the satisfaction of one who finds himself the center of a storm of his own creation. For it was with a start of surprise, a gasp of incredulity and a wall of horror that Atlantis read the news of the upper world. Previously, when I had let loose a few hints as to life on earth, I had witnessed some curious reactions; but the former bewilderment and disgust of the people now seemed insignificant by comparison. It would be impossible to convey any idea of their repugnance to earthly life as I portrayed it; it was almost as if they had learned that we had gone back on all fours, or had joined the orang-utan and the gibbon in the trees; and the dozens of letters I received, the dozens of visitors that poured in upon me, and the dozens of inquiries addressed to me at public meetings, all gave evidence of a single but profound emotion: a sense of wonder and of revulsion at the degeneracy of the upper world.

Perhaps the clearest proof of the general attitude was to be seen in the reviews of the book—reviews which, unlike earthly criticism, were not printed, but were delivered orally before gatherings at the Hall of Public Enlightenment.

LET me quote, for example, from a typical address. The speaker was Thermanides, a well-known writer on social and philosophic questions; and his views regarding the upper world were milder in many ways than those of his audience. Speaking before an assemblage of four or five hundred, he showed himself to be precise and thorough in his acquaintance with my book.

"Since we have no reason to believe that the author has deliberately exaggerated," he declared, after summarizing the contents, "we must accept the picture of upper world life as he presents it. And what, therefore must we conclude? That Agripides was wise, wonderfully wise, when he urged us to submerge. There can hardly be any more distressing subject than the history of the earth; even the most daring satirist, playing upon his imagination to expose the stupidity of the human race, could not offer a blacker picture of follies, crimes and inanities than Anson Harkness has painted for us in all seriousness. For what do we find to be the outstanding historical facts as he depicts them? Has the human race gone continuously forward, forgetting its savage instincts in perfecting a civilization at once beautiful and secure?—has man come to look on man otherwise than as beast looks on beast?—or has society come to be com-

CHAPTER XXXII

A Happy Consummation

posed of nothing more than a clothed jungle pack? No, my friends—unfortunately no, if we would believe the volume before us. Slave-raids and wars; rebellions and murders; conquest and persecution; treachery and rapine and wholesale exploitation; dynasties that crumble and empires that decompose—these are the sign-posts of the past three thousand years; and evidently there has been no concerted or intelligent effort to create other and less revolting landmarks.

"Yet though the darkness seems impenetrable, I can see one faint glimmer of hope. In the self-satisfied blindness of the upper world reposes the possible solution. It is not a solution altogether pleasing to contemplate, but it is the sort of cleansing remedy that nature will sometimes provide when a wound has festered beyond possibility of healing. For if no ordinary cure be attainable, life will sometimes take the sword into her own hands, and with one blow wipe out all her old mistakes, and with one blow bring annihilation. It is that stroke which, it seems to me, is about to fall upon the upper world man, smiting his rancorous and lopsided civilization, and turning against his own throat that knife with which he thinks to gouge out the eyes of his foe. And this is perhaps well, my friends, for after earthly man has committed suicide, the world will be ready for a population of less shortsighted and quarrelsome creatures, be they only beetles or ants!"

With a thankful gesture, as of one who lectures on the impending extinction of cannibalism, the speaker returned to his seat; while, much to my chagrin, I noted that his words had apparently found high favor with his audience. And those that arose in the ensuing discussion were not less narrow-minded than the principal reviewer himself; they seemed to imagine that my book had been intended as a sort of catalogue of horrors instead of as a restrained and veracious history; either they suggested that I must have exaggerated hopelessly, or else they agreed that the upper world was so decadent that a second "Good Destruction" would be desirable. "Blood-curdling," "Sepulchral," "An able story of depravity and crime," "The last word in thrills and terror"—these were some of the expressions used by the various commentators; and, to judge from their remarks, one might have thought that I had written a popular novel of mystery and murder instead of a sober history.

But while all Atlantis was reading the book and being provoked and shocked by my most commonplace statements, I was surprised to observe one effect which I deplored even more than the gross misunderstanding of upper world standards and ideas. For the "History" had acted like a bombshell against the Party of Emergence! Deserters from our standards were now legion, and in a few weeks we had lost all that we had gained following the discovery of the crack in the wall. It was as if the people had been frightened by my picture of the lands above seas, frightened so that they wished to shun all contact with the earth as they might shun things unclean and evil; and despite all that Xanocles and the other Emergence leaders could do, it was impossible to shake the masses free of this ridiculous attitude. At a test vote of an Emergence measure two months after the appearance of the "History of the Upper World," we were defeated more decisively than even our foes had predicted, defeated by the overwhelming ratio of ten to one!

In my disappointment and self-accusing despair, I bitterly regretted that I had not written my book from a less realistic point of view, for I knew that nothing short of a catastrophe or a miracle could now open up the lanes back to the earth for the thirty-nine men from the H-III.

NOT many months after the publication of the "History of the Upper World" there occurred a vastly more important event. At least, it was vastly more important to me, and constituted the most fortunate episode of all my life in Atlantis. Ever since that encouraging talk with Aelios in "The Temple of the Stars," I had been drawing gradually nearer to her; and by slow and unconscious degrees, so subtle that we ourselves could hardly note the change, we seemed to be entering upon the rôle of lovers. There was no emotional demonstration, and no deliberate reference to love, for in Atlantis it was considered undignified to express any casual amorous sentiments; but at times in her eyes I would catch that reassuring look I had noted at rare intervals before, and in our increasingly frequent meetings her manner seemed to be tinged by something indefinably wistful and yet indefinably gentle that I had not previously observed.

It might be imagined that the appearance and wide discussion of my book would have had an adverse effect upon her; but, fortunately, I had shown her many chapters before publication, and the contents were no surprise to her. And while she was at one with her people in loathing the upper world, she could hardly blame me for the conditions I depicted. Indeed, she was soon to give proof that she did not consider me in the least a partner in the supposed backwardness of my race.

I do not now recall the precise circumstances that led up to the climax; I only know that it was on one of my numerous visits to her home, when we were alone together in the tapestried room of the pale blue lanterns. Nothing had suggested to me in advance that our interview to-day was to differ from our previous interviews, and certainly nothing could have suggested such a thought to her; but somehow the conversation drifted into unexpected channels, and we found ourselves provocatively near the subject of love; and somehow her words (though I cannot now remember their trend) stirred up all my checked and slumbering emotions, forced down the barriers of my reserve, filled me with a sudden and unlooked for courage, and urged my lips to frame words that I had not premeditated. And almost as much to my own surprise as to hers, I found myself proposing that she marry me!

But was my rashness appropriately punished? Far from it. What was my amazement, and what my delight, when she looked up at me with trustful, grave blue eyes and quietly consented!

And yet it all seemed so simple that it might have been an everyday occurrence! She had taken my proposal almost as a matter of course, almost as if she had expected it; but at the same time the exalted and happy light in her eyes showed that she was far from indifferent.

"I was not sure before," she murmured, simply, after my first rapturous exclamations. "But now I am quite certain. We will be all in all to one another, will we not, my beloved?"

I forget just how I replied; I have an impression that my arms performed some lively antics, with Aelios as their goal, and that anything I said must have been merely incidental.

"When shall the day be, Aelios?" I asked, when in a mood for discussion. "When do you say?"

"When do you want me to say?" she returned, as though surprised at my query. "If we are both sure, what is the use of delaying?"

By dint of further questioning, I learned that long engagements were unknown in Atlantis. Although usually so slow-going and leisurely, the natives seemed to me singularly hasty in this one regard; once two people had decided upon marriage, it was not customary to allow more than the few days' interval necessary for the preparations. It had always been so in Atlantis, Aelios explained, and she could not imagine how it could be otherwise, for why subject the young couple to the unnatural tension of waiting, and why make love ridiculous by arbitrarily starving it?

Previously, when I had dared to think of the possibility of marriage with Aelios, I had half reconciled myself to the prospect of a long engagement, since observation had taught me nothing of Atlantean marriage customs, and I had imagined that an interval at least of many months might be considered proper. And so I was a little bewildered by the unexpected imminence of our union; I was like a man who, long blind, has suddenly beheld a flash of light; and it took me a little while to adjust myself to the startling new unfolding vistas.

TO begin with, I was not sure quite what was expected of me. Should I present Aelios with a ring or similar trinket such as was customary on earth? or was some more elaborate gift deemed necessary? In my perplexity, I consulted Xanocles, who merely smiled at my doubts. "Marriage with us," he explained, "is not treated as a form of barter; nor is it a bargain wherein precious articles must be given as sureties. We have long ago stamped out of our marriage system all traces of its primitive origin—all traces of that old custom which regarded it merely as a contract of sale, and which in the beginning demanded the parental receipt of cattle or other material property, and later required rings or similar baubles as a tender of the purchase price if not as a pledge of good faith. When two of our people are married, they would consider it degrading to be expected to give anything beyond themselves."

But even after I had been relieved on this important subject, there was still much that troubled me. Aelios had decided that but eight days were to intervene before the ceremony (this being about the usual time); and, despite all my joyous anticipations, I trembled just a little at the thought that I was so soon to exchange my known if monotonous bachelor life for an unknown career as Atlantean husband. But, fortunately, my hours were so completely occupied that I had little chance to be disturbed by doubts. For one thing, I spent a great deal of time with Aelios; for another thing, I was much entertained by my friends, who were astonished and yet loudly congratulatory upon hearing the news, and insisted upon putting me through long ordeals of questions, laughter, and amiable chaffing remarks. An entire meeting of the Upper World Club was given over to a celebration alleged to be in my honor; and President Gavison, after unbending from his official sternness to wish me luck in terms that I thought just a little wistful and a little reminiscent of his own lost happiness, was followed in quick succession by the various other club members, all of whom strove to express themselves with appropriate levity. Had there been such a thing as an intoxicant in Atlantis, I am sure that we would have had a merry old time; but, for lack of the proper stimulants, the men had to be content with their questionable jests, with poking me mirthfully in the ribs, with slapping me heartily on the back, with expressing the wish that they might be in my shoes (or, rather, sandals, since these were the only footwear in Atlantis), and

with laughing and guffawing in a generally irresponsible and uproarious manner.

But as the few remaining days slid by, did I have no thought of her whom I had left on earth? Did I not think of Alma Huntley, she to whom I had once pledged devotion? Perhaps I should be ashamed, but I am not, to say that the memory of her scarcely entered my mind. She was no more than a shadow in a world that was daily growing more shadowy, in an existence I had outlived and could not expect to re-enter; and if at times she would obtrude herself before me like a dim melancholy presence without color or form, such occasions were growing increasingly rare. Now that Aelios seemed so near and our two lives were so soon to be fused, Alma was obscured as a pale star is obscured by the sunlight, all the torrents of my being welled up tumultuously toward Aelios, and it seemed as if her companionship and her love were the only love or companionship I had ever known or desired.

How near I was to enjoying that companionship for life became vividly apparent to me about three days after we had reached our decision. Then it was that Aelios and I, in accordance with the custom of the land, visited the local housing bureau, which was to assign us to our new lodgings. After we had duly placed our names side by side in a great venerable-looking ledger wherein all the wedded couples of the past hundred years were enrolled, we passed an exciting afternoon in the company of the chief housing representative, who showed us all the available dwelling places with the same obliging courtesy as when I had selected my bachelor quarters. As on the former occasion, there were so many desirable locations that the choice was difficult; and on passing each new threshold, Aelios would pause with a little cry of wonder or surprise, and would point in admiration to some distinctive feature of arrangement or decoration. Needless to say, I too was dazzled and delighted; particularly since I had previously seen only apartments designed for single people. None of these homes were very large; indeed, most of them had but three or four rooms in addition to the roof sleeping chambers and the almost invariable central court; but they were the most home-like little nooks one could imagine, and were made attractive not only by the lawns and flowering gardens that surrounded them, but by their tastefully furnished rooms, whose lamps and tapestries and statuary were never too lavish or ornate and yet always gave an effect at once picturesque and cozy.

Our choice was in favor of a little butterfly-shaped dwelling, with silvery walls inlaid with mother-of-pearl and high-arched windows surrounded by vivid bands of stained glass. The interior appeared entrancing to us both, for not only were the walls and ceilings frescoed as though by a master hand, but the painted designs were matched by the very rugs on the floor and the draperies that screened the doorways; while a little statue-lined fountain that bubbled perpetually in the court fascinated us both by its rainbowed glimmering showers of spray.

"You may move in any time after your names are registered in the Marriage Book," said the housing representative, when we had notified him of our decision and he had duly recorded it. "But if ever you should find this house unsatisfactory, you have only to enter your complaint, and if possible we will provide you with another dwelling. But meanwhile this will be regarded as your official residence."

AND with these words the housing representative bowed a gracious retreat, while Aelios and I were left to inspect the home so soon to be ours.

CHAPTER XXXIII

The Flood Gates Open

With the enthusiasm of children we examined every nook and corner, growing constantly more excited as our search proceeded. Aelios was radiant; I had never seen her eyes sparkle more brightly, her cheeks glow more vividly; and I realized as never before how extraordinarily fortunate I was.

And it seemed as if her emotions corresponded with mine! "Is it not the strangest whim of fate," she asked, "that you have come down here to me, my beloved? How easily I might have missed you! How easily we might each have gone through life not knowing that the other existed!"

"So it has been with all lovers since the world began," I returned. "Even in Atlantis, love must always seem a miracle."

"Even in Atlantis, it always is a miracle," she amended; and she looked up at me with a smile so luminous and trustful, so kindly and so tinged with a rapturous emotion, that I could not but admit that she was right.

The days that followed this delightful interview are but a blur in my memory. Although every hour was slow-footed with the suspense and the waiting, it seems to me that but a moment elapsed between our departure from our chosen home and our happy return . . . the intervening events are all obscured by that never-to-be-forgotten morning when Aelios and I entered the office of the Local Adviser and were officially united.

The actual ceremony was insignificant—indeed, there was no ceremony at all. We had merely to record our names for a second time, writing them in the Marriage Book which the housing representative had mentioned—an enormously thick volume bound in blue and gold, with thousands of pages, of which one was devoted to the history of each marriage. There were no questions asked us; there were no high-sounding formulas to be spoken by clockwork; there were no official representatives of saintliness to offer dogmatic advice; there were no vows to be taken, no promises to be made, no witnesses to gape or snicker, no pompous giving or receiving of the bride. We merely furnished the State with that record which it required, and did so without having to purchase a preliminary printed tag by way of permission; and after we had entered our names in the book, we were not insulted with any attempt to sanctify proceedings with words of antique witchcraft, nor humiliated by any implication that our own feelings would not amply solemnize the day.

Of course, if we desired to celebrate our nuptials with a festival of any sort, that was our privilege—a privilege which the State would recognize by providing an appropriate hall for the day. As it happened, most bridal couples availed themselves of this right; and we were no exception; when our marriage had been officially recorded, we repaired to a flower-decked chamber where a few of Aelios' friends and relatives were awaiting us. And after receiving greetings and congratulations, we did not pass our time in feasting or drinking, nor in making merry nor in riotous jests; but we danced for a while a sedate dance timed to ethereal strains of music; and later we all sat quietly about the room, Aelios at my side and the others on mats and sofas opposite, while the lights were subdued, and we listened to a still more ethereal music, which rose and quavered in a voice of joy like the notes of melodious birds, then faintly trilled like a far-off elfin call or throbbled and sang in an organ-burst of ecstasy, until one was moved almost to tears by the revealed poignancy and beauty of life, and came to look upon love with a new reverence and a new wonder.

WHEN I look back now upon my life in Atlantis, my sojourn there seems to divide itself into two periods, of which the longer and by far the more tranquil, dates from my union with Aelios. In the new-found contentment of our marriage—and ours was no exception to the general rule—we seemed to lose track of time; months and years began gliding by at a smooth and even pace that was particularly deceptive because there were no seasons to mark the change and there were no outstanding events to serve as landmarks.

Perhaps the secret lay in the fact that Aelios and I were both amply occupied; for in the hours when we were not together, we each had our own work to keep us busy. Aelios still tutored for several hours a day, and still led in the dances at public festivals; for in Atlantis no distinction was made between a married and a single woman, except in the event of motherhood; and even a mother, while released from her prescribed duties, was expected to keep alive a broad interest in life by performing some optional services.

For my own part, I was no less busy than Aelios, for after I had completed my "History of the Upper World," I had again been summoned by the Committee on Selective Assignments, and had been directed to write a treatise on "Social Traditions and Institutions in the Upper World," wherein I might describe conditions above seas in greater detail than in my previous book. This task, although far from uncongenial, was proving both lengthy and laborious, for I tried to cover every modern country; and the further I proceeded the harder the work became, for the more I learned of Atlantis the more difficult it appeared to represent the earth in a light that was not merely pitiable.

I was now quite reconciled to passing my remaining days in Atlantis. Although Xanocles and his colleagues persisted with their agitation, the cause of Emergence was dwindling in my mind to an impossible dream; and, had it not been for the cataclysm which aroused us all to frenzied action, I might have been content to grow gray and wrinkled in the Sunken World. For now that Aelios was mine, I found that life was far richer than ever before; that not only was I steeped in pleasurable activity amid a delightful environment, but that there was an almost charmed absence of strain and hurry, and a leisure and serenity that would once have seemed the attributes only of a Nirvana.

It is true, of course, that I could not escape all the ordinary physical ills of life. Once, for example, when my awkwardness betrayed me in an athletic contest and I suffered a broken arm, I was conducted to a State hospital, where a State physician skillfully treated my injury; and once when the incessant golden glare began to tell upon my eyes, I had to visit a State oculist, who relieved the strain by prescribing a pair of wide-rimmed amber-tinged glasses.

My appearance was changing, moreover, in other ways than the mere addition of glasses. I was acquiring a long beard, largely owing to the habit formed during my first days in Atlantis; and my complexion was taking on a curious greenish tint, due to some peculiar action of the Atlantean light—an action to which the Atlanteans themselves had an inherited immunity. But I was not alone in my queer pistache complexion; there were exactly thirty-eight others who could show the same distinctive pigmentation; and

so marked was the coloration that, as the men sometimes declared, our origin was "written on our skins."

My fellow members of the Upper World Club meanwhile did not share my liking for Atlantis. As time went by, in fact, they seemed to care less and less for their adopted country. With the exception of Gavison, who had written a brief but popular treatise on "Navigation on Upper World Waters" and a not less popular "Comparison of Upper and Lower World Civilizations," there was not one of my former shipmates who was adapting himself to life in Atlantis or who was not remiss in his obligations as a citizen. While they had all acquired at least a rudimentary knowledge of the language and were all reasonably successful in performing some prescribed mechanical task for two or three hours a day, yet none of them had accomplished anything in any of those artistic or intellectual pursuits which alone were considered worth while in Atlantis. For how, indeed, could they hope to conform to the standards of a world that had so little in common with their own? Apparently the natives did not even expect them to conform, and tolerated lapses that would have been considered disgraceful in born Atlanteans; but they themselves appeared to feel that they were somehow inferior, somehow out of place; and much of their restlessness, and much of their longing to escape, is to be explained by the desire for a less ideal but more familiar mode of life.

CONSIDERING the eagerness with which my companions would have exchanged the ease of Atlantis for even the most strenuous labors and hardships of the earth, it seems ironic that the man ultimately chosen to emerge, was he whose marriage to an Atlantean had made him more than resigned to the Sunken World. My sole excuse is that the choice, when it fell upon me, was made wholly upon the suggestion of others, and occurred at a time of such acute public peril that the happiness or fate of individuals was as nothing.

For the hour was to come—and to come with startling suddenness—when a fateful writing was to glare from the walls of Atlantis. I had been in the Sunken World seven full years when the menace burst forth, and I was not there seven days after it appeared. . . . But in the interval I was a witness to scenes of such havoc, such horror, confusion and despair as I had never seen before and fervently hope I shall never see again.

It torments me now to recall that all that terror and all that irremediable loss might have been avoided, had we but heeded the advice of Pelades, Pelades who insisted that the crack in the wall had not been adequately repaired. . . .

But let me not anticipate. I must describe as passionately as I can those overwhelming events which descended like lightning to blast Atlantean life, and which are so disturbing even in memory that my pen trembles and my startled mind takes fresh alarm. Merely to try to record those distracting days and nights is to be obsessed as by an old madness; I can feel a paralyzing dread spreading once more through all my nerves; I can feel my brain grow numb, my eyes grow strained and distended, my arteries throb with delirious haste. And all the while confused visions come swarming across my mind—visions of roaring vigils by lamplit walls of glass, visions of huddled faces, weeping or praying or with terror-stricken eyes, visions of thundering waters, panicky flights, submerged temples and inundated plains; and it all seems like some nightmare I dreamt long ago, yet more vivid than any nightmare, for there are sobs

and lamentations that echo even now in my memory, and pleading lips that shall never stir again, and agonized eyes that peer at me like phantoms which will not be exorcised.

Long before, in moments of aimless fancy, I had sought to picture to myself the end of the world; to imagine the consternation and horror of an earth maddened by dread of impending doom. But I had never thought that I myself would be the spectator of a crumbling universe. . . .

As in the case of the crack in the wall years before, the danger appeared with devastating suddenness. One moment, all was tranquil; the next moment, the Sunken World was in a frenzy. I remember that one afternoon Aelios and I had gone to the Agripides Theatre to witness a performance of some sort (its precise nature has slipped from my mind); and it was at the close of the first act that the warning came. From the unexplained absence of the chorus that usually sang during intermissions, I might have suspected that something was wrong; but actually I was without misgivings until suddenly a great burnished, silvery horn—the horn of the Autophone!—was lifted quietly on the stage.

At this unexpected sight, a stab of alarm darted through me; Aelios seized my hand and held it as if for reassurance; the audience sat rigid and tense, like persons who behold a ghost. For an instant we heard no sound, except the quick breathing of our neighbors; then the strained silence was broken by an uncanny hollow voice that issued sonorously as if from nowhere.

"A great misfortune has befallen," announced the unseen, in tones that sounded almost sepulchral. "The crack in the glass wall has re-appeared, but this time it is of more serious proportions than before."

The voice faltered for an instant and halted, while murmurs of dismay, terror and unbelief shuddered through the audience.

In a more deliberate and even graver manner the speaker continued: "Late last evening our navigators observed that the Salty River was higher than usual; and an investigating party sent out to-day by the High Chief Adviser has discovered that the wall has actually given way at one point, and that the water is pouring in through a fissure several feet across. There is as yet no cause for despair, for the surplus water, while highly inconvenient, can be disposed of by the reserve capacity of our intra-atomic pumps, which are equipped for all ordinary emergencies and can discharge fifty per cent more than their usual delivery. But there is danger that the break will expand before repairs can be made; and for this reason the High Chief Adviser requests that you try to meet the situation courageously, and freely enlist your brains and your services till our present peril is overcome."

IT would be impossible to convey any idea of the commotion which these words created. The people did indeed follow the High Chief Adviser's advice to be courageous, for there was no more than a hint of that panic which one might have expected. But there could be no further thought of the performance in the theatre. After an instant's chill silence, the audience arose with one accord; and men's faces were blanched and women could be heard muttering in fear as the crowd began pushing toward the exits. In their excitement, the people had forgotten their usual courtesy; and Aelios and I were shoved and jostled in a way that reminded me of the New York subways. It was all I could do not to lose track of her amid the mob; yet both of us were anxious not to be

separated, particularly since the speechless eagerness of the throng, the sighs of women, the rapid breathing of men and our own fast-beating hearts, all served to fill us with grim forebodings.

Once out of the great theatre, the people were driven as by a common instinct toward the river. All seemed fearful of even a second's delay, as though our haste might repair the fractured wall! In a long, swiftly moving column, constantly augmented as we advanced, we followed the winding avenue that curved toward the waterfront. None of us spoke more than an occasional word; even Aelios was silent, but she clutched my arm with unwonted firmness, and looked up at me with eyes wherein apprehension alternated with a reassuring courage.

But there was no prop for courage in the sight that greeted us at the river bank. The stream, which previously had flowed five or six feet beneath the docks, was now not more than eight or ten inches below the level.

In speechless dismay we watched that broad, greenish-gray torrent go swishing and gurgling past. But what was there that we could do? Nothing—except to stand and gape helplessly at that swift-flowing, swollen stream. Indeed, we seemed worse than merely helpless, for as I stood there with Aelios amid that horror-faced crowd, I became conscious—as during that other crisis years before—that I was arousing a singular repulsion. My neighbors were edging away from me visibly; some were pointing toward me, or uttering half-suppressed oaths; I thought I heard some one ruefully mumbling something about "That foreigner" and something else about "The cause of all our troubles."

I would quickly have withdrawn with Aelios from that hostile throng, had I not chanced to observe a slim, gray form approaching from far upstream. With the speed of the swiftest racing craft it drew near, and in a few minutes was recognizable as an intratomic boat, akin to the one I had boarded years before. Much to my relief, it came to a rapid halt, drew up at the dock, and let down its gangplank. And as the crowd forced its way on to the docks, Aelios and I was not slow in finding seats for what was sure to prove an extremely exciting trip.

And exciting it was—far more exciting than we could have desired. We had been under way only a few minutes when the aspect of the river began to change disquietingly. Except for the current, it lost the character of a river entirely, and took on the appearance of a long lake! On both sides the water spread in a smooth-flowing sheet two or three miles broad; and above the surface in places stared clumps and clusters of vegetation, with here and there a miniature island; while several temples and colonnades stood with marble bases buried in the water, like the palaces of some aquatic goddess.

But if this overflow was alarming, the full extent of the disaster was not evident until we approached the glass wall itself. This time it did not require any searchlight to reveal the nature of the injury; our ears might have told us if our eyes had not—but our eyes had sufficient to report. As we strode along the little clay path toward the wall, we became aware of a broad, gleaming, greenish expanse between—a sheet of water where all had been dry land! And into that sheet of water, with a continuous thunder equal to that of the floods from the river valve, a long, white torrent spurted in a gracefully curving jet, shooting outward hundreds of yards from the glass bulwark, and descending with a splashing as of some gigantic fountain. It was impossible to estimate the volume, except to say that it was enormous; nor could we

see the nature or extent of the leak, since the intervening water forbade our close approach. But we observed how the overflow worked its way circuitously into the Salty River in a sort of channel of its own choosing; and occasional swift-moving lights, which even from our distance we could see flashing from beyond the glass, showed us that the repair ships were busy trying to seal up the crack. But from the beginning we knew how hopeless were their efforts—with their midget vessels and midget tools they were like ants trying to stem the force of a Niagara. And the utter helplessness of their plight—and of ours—became tragically apparent when suddenly a great elongated, gray mass came flying in with the torrents from the sea, and fell with a splash and a clatter in a battered heap projecting above the waters—a rescuing submarine that had been hurled in through the gap in the wall!

CHAPTER XXXIV

Swollen Torrents

IT was five days later that I received the summons from the High Chief Adviser . . . and made ready for the most extraordinary of all my adventures.

In the intervals, all Atlantis was in a state verging upon madness. The commotion created by the original discovery of the crack was insignificant beside the terror that now dominated every inhabitant. To say that the country seemed stricken with paralysis would be to understate the conditions; rather, it was driven to a dumb distraction, like some great beast that feels its foot in a trap. Only one thought was in anyone's mind, only one topic on anyone's lips; the people drifted hither and thither like phantoms, rushing back and forth between the cities and the spurting leak in the wall, sometimes engaged furtively in whispered discussions, on other occasions muttering half-audible prayers or withdrawing into themselves like men brought face to face with Fate. Some would hover near the offices of the High Chief Adviser, awaiting hopeful news that did not come; some would haunt the river banks, watching the swelling torrents go murmuring and whirling past; some would huddle together in small family groups, as though mortally afraid to lose sight of their dear ones; some would merely go pacing around like rats in a cage, scarcely heeding where they went, their white faces and harried eyes expressive of a dread they dared not mention.

But none—none who were not driven by the most stringent orders—were heeding their daily duties. For the first time in history, the cities were inadequately supplied with food; the official producers' and distributors shared the general inertia, the people had to clamor at the doors of the great municipal warehouses for their meager rations, and actual starvation seemed certain unless the workers could be urged back to the fields.

But more appalling to my mind—vastly more appalling, since it seemed like the overthrow of the very order of nature—was the laxity with regard to the golden orbs that ruled the Atlantean day. Owing no doubt to the negligence of the official in charge, the clockwork that controlled these artificial suns ran down on what should have been the third night, and the luminaries continued in full blaze after the usual hour of darkness. But few seemed even to notice the change, and most continued frenziedly watching the waters or awaiting encouraging reports; while those that could, snatched a few hours of troubled sleep during the continuous daylight, and many still kept their useless vigils with drawn faces and weary eyes.

Meantime the Salty River continued to rise. Slowly and insidiously, by inches and by half inches, it crept up and up, up and up, until after two days not more than a hand's breadth separated it from the top of the embankment. And after three days it had not more than a finger's breadth to go, while on the fourth day we could see thin, sparkling streams flowing down the more low-lying street, not deep enough to make them quite impassable, but lending to the columned thoroughfares the aspect of some pathetic Venice. Simultaneously the Autophone brought news that the small towns of Malgos and Dorion had been inundated and that their inhabitants had fled for higher ground; that the larger cities of Atolis, Lerenon, and Aedla were rearing embankments to keep out the waters, and that the farm lands of eastern Atlantis were flooded as far as the eye could see. But little that was even mildly hopeful was reported. It was stated that the repair ships were still trying to cope with the leak, though without success; that the intra-atomic pumps were disposing of most of the surplus water, but were being taxed to capacity; that in several places huge electric shovels were at work, digging out great hollows into which the floods might be drained; that efforts were being made to freeze huge masses of water, and force the ice against the wall, in the attempt to stem the torrents. . . . But all the while the river continued to rise, and nothing short of a miracle seemed likely to check disaster.

After five days the water was flowing to a depth of many inches through half the streets of Archeon; and only the rapid erection of earthworks had saved the other half. And it was after five nerve-racking days that—as I have stated—I received the summons from the High Chief Adviser.

The messenger—a wan-faced old man who seemed to be in a breathless hurry—was waiting for me when I returned home with Aelios after strolling aimlessly for hours through the unflooded portions of the town. From the grave attitude with which he greeted me, I knew at once that something was amiss; but he had no explicit information to offer. "The High Chief Adviser wishes to see you without delay," was all that he would report. And having uttered these words, he began edging away as though he had immediate business elsewhere.

There being nothing else to do, I accompanied this singular messenger after hastily assuring Aelios that I would return as soon as possible.

As I might have anticipated, our walk turned out to be far from pleasant. The old man had evidently been long trained in diplomacy, for I could not induce him to speak except non-committally and in monosyllables. And all the way to the office of the Adviser I was left to my own conjectures, while we skirted public squares that looked like lakes or waded ankle-deep through the salty water.

ARRIVING at the many-domed sandstone edifice where the Atlantean government had its headquarters, my companion bade me wait in a book-lined anteroom, and went to notify his chief of my arrival. It was as though my coming had been awaited, for the old man had hardly left me when he reappeared and motioned me to follow him.

I have a vague remembrance of accompanying him through long, arched galleries; but of these my mind retains no definite impression, and the next thing I clearly recall is that I stood in a little blue-walled room before an impressive-looking elderly man whose picture I had often seen. His long, furrowed, sagacious features were manifestly those of a scholar, but there was a squareness about the jaw that marked

him also as a man of action; while at the same time there was a patriarchal benignity about the sympathetic lines of the face. But one quality there was which dominated him now, and which none of the pictures had shown: an air of utter fatigue, of melancholy, almost of despair, all too plainly written in the hollows that underlined the weary, gray eyes, in the pale cheeks almost totally drained of blood, and in the haggard expression as of one who has not slept for days.

To the right of the High Chief Adviser was seated a man whom I recognized with surprise. It was Xanocles, also looking pallid and worn—and as he rose to greet me I began to conceive some faint idea why I had been summoned.

The Chief Adviser gravely motioned me to a seat at his left; and as I sank into the cushioned chair he plunged without formality into an explanation.

"I need hardly tell you," he commenced, speaking rapidly but in dull, sober tones, "how serious is the crisis that confronts Atlantis. But perhaps no one—except those of us who are on the inside of affairs—realizes quite how acute the danger is. Frankly speaking, we are incapable of dealing with the emergency. The intra-atomic pumps have been working to capacity for five days, forcing out fifty per cent more than their usual volume; but, even so, the water is pouring in at the rate of several tons a second faster than we can drive it out. This in itself would indicate a grave enough peril; but this is not the worst. Our engineers tell us that the crack is extending to portions of the wall previously unaffected, and that new sections may give way at any time. When this happens, it will be—the end."

The High Chief Adviser paused, bleakly frowning; then, with a piercing glance at me, as if to see whether I had anticipated his meaning, he continued, "It is apparent that Atlantis cannot save itself. We are facing a peril unique in history, and have not the weapons with which to combat it. If help comes, it must come from outside. And that is why I have summoned you."

"But I don't exactly see—" I began.

"Let me explain," the official continued, impatiently. "You yourself of course can do nothing. But you come from a people who, to judge from your writings, have developed remarkable engineering and mechanical skill. I am hopeful that their science may be able to devise some means of saving us, and for that reason I am planning to send you above seas for help. What do you think of the idea?"

"Why, I—I think it might be worth trying," was all I was able to gasp in reply.

"Your friend Xanocles also thinks it worth trying," proceeded the Adviser suavely. "Now I personally have always been against the policy of Emergence; but it is imperative to try new measures; and at a time like this, fortunately, the law empowers me to take any action on my own initiative. And so I sent for Xanocles to-day as one of the most prominent local members of the Emergence Party, and when I asked whom he would advise me to appoint as special envoy to the upper world he had no hesitation about mentioning you."

"But why me?" I demanded, doubtful of my qualifications for so high an office.

"Well, to be sure, you were not the only one," stated the Adviser. "He also recommended a certain Gavison, but we have decided to hold him in reserve, and if you do not return in a few days we will send him out with a second submarine. Meanwhile, if you would care to accept—"

"Why, of course—of course I'll accept—if it is for

the good of Atlantis," I declared. "But just what would you expect of me?"

"One of our submersible vessels, with a crew of four men, will be in readiness at the docks early tomorrow morning. You will board it, and it will bear you out through the eastern valve and to any part of the upper world you may direct. But you are to waste no time about informing your fellows of the menace that confronts Atlantis. They too have submersible vessels, as your arrival here proves—let them send some of their ships down here, if they can, with materials to repair the wall. But above all things, you must remember not to delay, not to delay!"

"I will do my best," I promised. "But let me not hold out any false hopes—I am not sure that the upper world will be able to assist."

"At any rate, you can try," sighed the Head of the Atlantean government. "It is a chance worth taking. We lose nothing by the attempt."

And then, fixing on me that powerful magnetic glance common to all the Atlanteans, he demanded, "You will spare no effort?"

"I will spare no effort," I solemnly vowed.

"Then the fates be with you!" The High Chief Adviser rose and firmly took both my hands; and I thought that just a trace of emotion dimmed his eyes as he fervently continued, "I need say no more. You know as well as I know how much depends upon this."

Above all things, Harkness, you will make haste, you will make haste, will you not? Good-bye—and may good fortune be yours!"

And the next moment, accompanied by Xanocles, I was passing through the outer galleries. The last glimpse I caught of the High Adviser showed me the great head sagging, the lids wearily drooping over the melancholy gray eyes as if in utmost renunciation or despair.

FROM the Adviser's office I hastened straight home, leaving Xanocles, after being assured that he would come to me early in the morning.

I found Aelios impatiently awaiting my return. "You have been long," she murmured, although it seemed to me that I had come back very quickly. And the big, blue eyes looked up at me inquiringly, and I had to explain at once the meaning of the Adviser's summons.

She followed my recital without a word; but heavy furrows began to appear upon her brow when I told her how serious was the plight of Atlantis; and a big limpid teardrop flowed unheeded down her cheek.

"You did right to accept the commission," she said, coming to me when I had finished my story, and resting one hand affectionately upon my shoulder. And a deep melancholy made moist her eyes as she continued, "I am glad that the choice has fallen upon you. When do we start on our voyage?"

"We?" I repeated, staring at her in surprise.

"Yes, we. I intend to go with you, of course."

"But, Aelios, that's impossible!" I exclaimed, springing up and drawing her closely to me. "You know how much I'd like to have you with me. But you don't seem to realize the peril."

"Peril?" She laughed disdainfully, as she withdrew from me. "Do you think I'd have you submit to a peril I wouldn't share in? Besides, is it not in the interest of my own country? Should I stay here doing nothing when I might help to save Atlantis?"

"But, even so, would you be permitted—" I started to protest.

"Of course I'd be permitted! The High Chief Adviser would be more than willing—only, of course, he wouldn't ask me to take the risk."

"And neither would I ask you—" I objected; but she cut me short by demanding, sharply, "Do you think it's any greater than the risk of staying here?" And, with the air of one whose mind is made up and is not to be questioned, she reminded me, "we had better be getting ready, for I don't suppose we'll have any time to waste."

And thereupon, the question having been settled, we began our meager preparations. But we found that there was not much to prepare, for of course the submarine would be well provisioned; and, except for a few personal trinkets, we could think of little to take away with us. But it occurred to me to bring a copy of Homer's lost masterpiece, the "Telegonus," which might convince the upper world of the truth of my reports about Atlantis. And it also occurred to me to pay a pilfering expedition to the museum, which was now untenanted even by the doormen; and, when I returned, my pockets were weighed down with several pieces of gold, and my arms were laden with a large amorphous bundle, whose contents might have been identified as an Ensign's uniform.

Of the night that followed I have only the most confused and disturbing remembrance. I know that I did not sleep, except to drowse away by brief, nightmare-haunted spells; and I also know that Aelios did not sleep, for her mind, like mine, was busy contemplating the adventure before us. Yet we were both too weary for connected thought; and jumbled visions were all that greeted us as we lay there speechless in the blackness.

The moment the lights were flashed on again we renounced our futile attempts at slumber. And we had hardly risen and made ourselves presentable when we began to receive visitors. Not only did Xanocles arrive as he had promised, but the entire Upper World Club appeared in a group, for I had notified Gavison of my prospective departure and had expressed my desire to see all the men again before I left.

Since all our visitors insisted on seeing us off, it was a good-sized company that attended us as we bade farewell to the butterfly-shaped building that had housed us so long, and set off through the streets of the stricken city toward the river. Yet our escort, while large, was far from merry, for the strain of the past few days was written upon us all, and the pale cheeks and weary looks of my companions matched their listless manner and their silence. One or two—and among them the unquenchable Stranahan—did indeed attempt to be jocular; but their efforts were half-hearted and flat, and their laughter rang thin and hollow like mockery; and as we drew nearer our goal and saw the flood rippling through the streets ahead, we heard no more of their jests, but all of us plunged onward speechlessly and with stern, set faces, oppressed as though by the shadow of some solemn and awful presence.

WHEN we reached the inundated districts, I of course urged my companions to turn back. But they paid no heed, and pressed gravely on their way, first wading ankle-deep, then halfway to their knees, while strung out in a long line among scattered houses that looked like lake dwellings. Here a marble edifice, there a colonnade, yonder a cluster of statues, projected above the deluge, whose green-gray current went swishing past as though from an inexhaustible source. Amid those fluid wastes, which had obliterated all familiar landmarks and gave to well known things a new and terrible majesty, it was impossible to be sure of our way; and once one of the men slipped into a depression so deep that he had to swim to save himself; and more than once some one tripped over

some buried obstacle, and went floundering at full length into the water, thereby provoking a short-lived outburst of mirth. So great were the dangers that we had to move very slowly; but we also moved with grim regularity, and our progress was without sound other than the monotonous splash, splash of our advancing feet.

Yet it was not only our own plight that made us moody and sad. As we plodded through the flooded districts, we had continual glimpses of the inhabitants—and in their aspect and manner there was nothing to reassure us. Here, through an open window, we would catch sight of several agile figures straining to bind some huge collection into a bundle; there we would observe a man descending from his doorstep into the enveloping waters, his back bent down with a great pile of household articles, a wan-faced woman clinging nervously to him or turning back with moist eyes to the home they were leaving. And we passed not one or two such refugees but scores, literally scores. One would have a three-year-old perched securely on his shoulder, another would be trying to soothe a crying babe or leading by the hand a frightened lad of five; some would be bearing off great heaps of clothing or huge cans and boxes that looked like food containers, and a few were puffing and panting to save their books, rugs and paintings.

Meanwhile the eyes of all the people were baleful with a wild, unnatural light; their features were assuming a furtive, hunted expression; their voices had lost their music, and had grown nervous and shrill. And all were looking bloodless and bedraggled; ominous hollows were forming in their cheeks and beneath their eyes; their clothes were soiled and untended, their beards scraggly and untrimmed; and many had lost their normal restraint, so that we passed a woman who sobbed and sobbed quite regardless of our approach, an old man who growled and gibbered insanely to himself, and more than one that did not even seem to see us, but stared upward intently with imploring face, while mumbling incoherent melancholy phrases.

When finally we drew near our destination, the water reached to the knees of the tallest of us, and our progress was more laborious and slower than ever. I now began to fear that we would not be able to locate the river bank, for how tell where the shallow water ended and the deep began? At length, however, I was relieved to observe a wide, unbroken flowing expanse several hundred yards ahead, and to note that a long rope, stretched in the water between improvised wooden supports, marked the river's theoretical edge.

It was just when we came in sight of our goal that the supreme horror befell. Even to this day I can recapture the amazement and alarm of that dread moment; and the abruptness of it all and the terror overwhelm me anew. Had the waters swelled and swept over us in a tidal wave, I would have been panic-stricken and yet halfway prepared—but I could not have anticipated that the blow was to strike from above rather than from beneath.

SUDDENLY—although this was only the beginning of the Atlantean day—the golden lights of the glass dome began to waver and flicker, then paled to a twilight glow, then (in less time than it takes to state) snapped into blackness.

So startled were we that we stood there transfixed; scarcely an oath issued from our petrified lips. The darkness was absolute; we could not see our nearest neighbors; we seemed walled in by oblivion. For a moment there was silence; then came a light splash-

ing to my left, and simultaneously dozens of voices burst forth bewilderingly in terror and dismay.

And when that first horrified outburst was dying down, there crept over us from a distance other cries—confused cries as of many voices sighing and wailing in chorus. And all those voices seemed to form into one, and to grieve and drone in a single long-drawn sob, with echoes reminding me uncannily of lost souls mourning in the dark.

But soon that melancholy tumult passed away; and we were aware only that we stood there knee-deep in the flood, in a silence unbroken except by the gurgling waters.

Then it was that the most quick-witted of us all came to his senses. Suddenly a vivid light stabbed the gloom just to my left; and by its glaring yellow illumination I could make out the tall form of Xanocles.

In his hands was a good-sized pocket flashlight. "I was a little afraid this might happen," he declared, trying to be matter-of-fact, and speaking loudly enough for us all to hear. "Lucky I had these lanterns with me." And, to our surprise, he calmly drew several more flashlights from the folds of his garments, and passed them to his nearest neighbors.

"The High Chief Adviser warned me yesterday that this was possible," he explained. "And so I thought it best to be prepared."

And then, while we all stood gaping at him like men with paralyzed minds, he continued, soothingly. "There is really nothing to be alarmed about. The water must have gotten into the electric power generators—that is all. In a few hours the lights will no doubt be shining again."

But his words did not carry conviction. In his voice was a note of concern that he could not wholly exclude; and as we glanced nervously into the gloom—a gloom that was all-enveloping except for our flashlights and an occasional firefly flicker in the far distance—we could not believe that the golden luminaries would soon beam upon us again.

It was a solemn procession that started splashing once more toward the river bank. Guided by the sallow illumination of the flashlights, we could barely find our course; and step by step, with laborious slowness, we plodded through the unrelenting flood. None of us could find the heart to utter a word; and from time to time, among my shadowy attendants, I caught glimpses of lips rigidly compressed and faces firmly set, as among men who go forth to meet the Ultimate. All the while Aelios was at my side, hovering close as if for shelter; and when I could I helped her over the more difficult places, though she too was speechless, like one whose thoughts are too appalling for expression.

Then, for an instant, hope came flashing back. A sudden radiance burst upon us from above; the great luminaries were once more touched with light, which fitfully expanded from a pale red glow almost to the normal golden—and then fitfully died out into utter gloom.

And our cries of rejoicing were frozen on our lips, and the darkness that ensued seemed more intense than ever. And once more there was only the silence, the wavering flashlights and the whirling floods.

Groping and floundering and sometimes sinking almost up to the hips in water, we at last found ourselves near the rope that marked the river's verge. And by turning upstream toward a dim but steady yellow light, we managed to locate the docks and the submarine, which we recognized by the radiance filtering through the portholes.

Then, almost before I realized that the ultimate

moment had come, I found myself assisting Aelios up the half-submerged gangplank and on to the deck of the grim, low-lying, shadowy ship. The next that I remember is that I was back again in two feet of water, and that a multitude of hands clasped mine, a multitude of voices were lifted simultaneously, first the voices of a mob attempting a cheer that died prematurely, then the voices of individuals, shouting out advice and farewells, wishing me a safe voyage, entreating me to make haste for the good of Atlantis. I have a recollection of seeing the earnest, grave face of Gavison by the uncertain, shifting illumination of the flashlights; the elongated, intellectual face of Xanocles; the youthful but sad-eyed and frightened face of Rawson, and Stranahan's droll countenance now furrowed into a tragic severity.

But in an instant all these faces—so familiar to me, and so well liked—had drifted out of view. I too stood upon the gangplank, lightly waving although my heart seemed dull and dead within me. Then I mounted to the deck, cast a last glance at the darkness that hid the marble temples of Atlantis, and waved for the last time to the dim watching figures. And as the flashlights began slowly to retreat, I descended a narrow stairway, heard an iron door clatter to a close above me, felt a jolt and a shudder that were followed by a regular, incessant quivering—and knew that I was on my way back to the earth.

CHAPTER XXXV

The Return

THE facts of my return from Atlantis have been reported so widely that it would be futile for me to dwell upon them. It is generally known how, having crossed the ocean at the sixty-knot speed made possible by our intra-atomic propellers, our submarine found its way to the mouth of the Potomac and almost up to Washington; how, after it had anchored obscurely some distance below the city, I donned my old uniform and made my way out under cover of night; how I hastened the next day to the offices of the naval department, disclosed my identity, and met with ridicule not only at my incredible tale, but at my strange appearance, my long beard, my goggles and my greenish skin.

Unfortunately, in the haste and confusion of my departure from the Sunken World, I had made one oversight. I had forgotten the copy of Homer's lost "Telegonus," which I had hoped to exhibit in verification of my story! Scattered lines of the poem, to be sure, did keep trailing through my mind with a wild, ringing majesty—but they were the merest fragments, and to recite them would have been to brand myself as a madman. Yet I had little other evidence to display. Aelios could not help me, for she could not speak English; and in spite of her exceptional beauty, there would have been nothing to prove that she had not been born above seas. And as for the four members of the submarine crew, they refused staunchly to leave the vessel; and, besides, they likewise could not speak English, and their fantastic Atlantean garb would no doubt have marked them also as lunatics.

And so there was nothing to do but wait, wait for days and days, haunting the naval offices, making myself a laughing stock and a nuisance, yet repeating my pleas so insistently that in the end they had to be heeded. But meanwhile I was losing time—time which I knew to be all-important. Even now Atlantis might be in a death-grip with the waters; and the difference of a few hours might bridge the gap between safety and disaster. Would not my fellows

make haste? was the question I kept asking and asking; and all the while they remained inactive and unmoved. Every day, with tears in her eyes, Aelios would inquire when the rescuing expedition was to set out; and every day I would nod sadly, and sigh, "Perhaps to-morrow." But to-morrow would bring little hope; and even when at last an investigation was undertaken, it was careless and dilatory—and it was long before I could convince the bewildered inspectors that I was actually one of the company of the lost X-111.

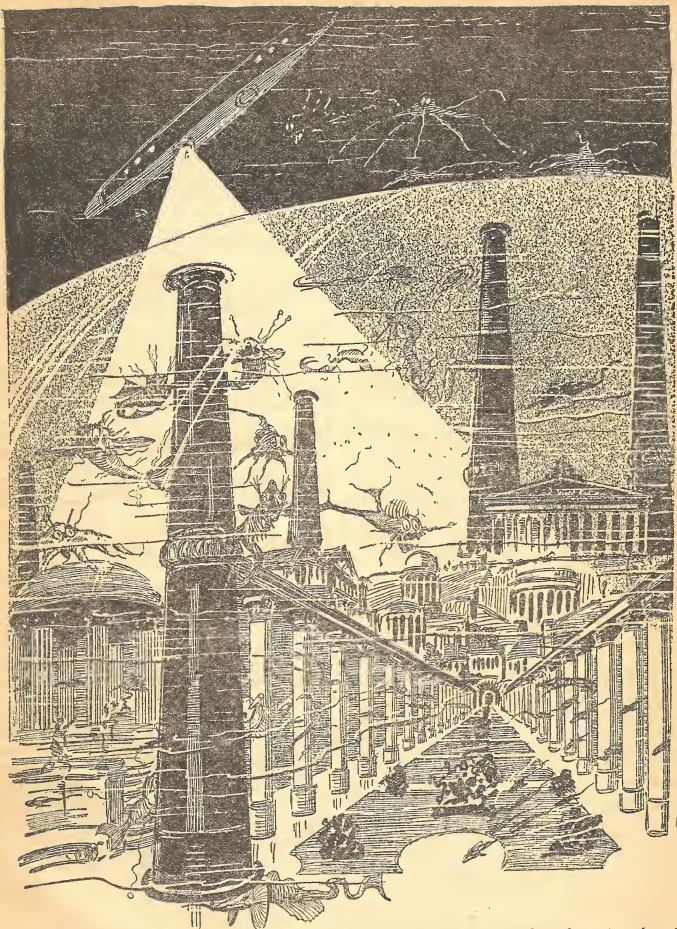
It was long, indeed, before I could even find any one to identify me. In a land where my acquaintances had been legion, I was apparently unknown; and my old friends had either been dispersed or else I had slipped out of their minds. Even Alma Huntley failed to reply to my letters; and it was months before I learned that, having long given me up as lost, she had left two years before for the Pacific Coast as the bride of the Reverend David Mosely.

But though my messages to Alma never reached their destination, a letter to my old friend, Frank Everett, survived many forwardings and found its goal; and not only did Everett hasten to me from New York, but he summoned others of our former group, whose testimony combined with the evidence of finger-prints and handwriting to identify me beyond dispute.

Matters now began to move more quickly—in fact, with a rapidity that was bewildering. Almost overnight my story was flashed from end to end of the land, and I found myself a public figure. Newspaper headlines flaunted my name, and the word Atlantis was on every one's lips; interviewers came swarming to see me, scientists with their demands for information, the heads of lecture bureaus and of motion picture corporations with their golden offers. But all that really interested me were the offers of assistance for the Sunken World. Several men of means became interested, and placed large funds at our disposal, so making possible the Harkness Institute for Marine Research; half a dozen engineers volunteered to accompany me back to Atlantis, and with their aid we secured implements and chemicals capable of sealing wide breaches in a glass wall. But we could produce no vessel other than that in which we had left Atlantis, for the naval submarines were not equipped for the deep waters of the Sunken World; and so when finally the rescuing party set off down the Potomac from Washington, its members numbered only six in addition to Aelios and myself and the original crew.

THE small size of this expedition and its limited equipment would alone have made us doubtful of success; but we remembered with acute misgivings that two full months had passed since we left Archeon, and that during all this time the flood waters must have been rising. We were particularly uneasy because of the failure of Gavison to appear in a second submarine, as the High Chief Adviser had promised; and, brooding upon his absence, we would recall how we had bidden farewell to Atlantis, and would think with a shudder of the bleak confusion of the people and the swelling torrents swishing through the darkness.

To make matters worse (if they could possibly be worse) our voyage back to Atlantis was beset with unforeseen difficulties. Owing to the absence of definite charts and our uncertainty as to the latitude and longitude of the Sunken World, we were lost for several days amid the wildest wastes of the Atlantic. At times we would dive to the sea bottom, or to such depths that Atlantis could not conceivably be beneath



Then, as the searchlights swayed and shifted till they swept the depths directly beneath, we began to make out familiar objects amid the obscurity. . . . For a moment I observed nothing alarming. Then, as my gaze became focused upon a gray dome just below, I 'oo cried out in dread realization. . . . Here and there a lantern-bearing object, with flapping finny body, went wavering through the windows and above the temple roofs!

us, and would go cruising for hours amid that black infinity or along the shell-strewn or bouldery floor of the ocean, staring through the portholes at the luminous-eyed creatures that flitted ghost-like about us, and here and there gaping horror-stricken at some contorted but strangely eloquent rusty iron mass. But of Atlantis itself there was no sign, and we had the queer impression that it had dissolved bubble-like amid the watery immensity.

And so at length our expedition converted itself into little more than a random questing after what did not appear to exist. Should we ever again catch a glimpse of the green-golden walls of our lost universe? There were moments when I was given to curious doubts, and felt that Atlantis, once lost, could never be found again; that the billows would cover it as completely from our sight as from the sight of the ages. But all the time, while we kept dashing at prodigious speed through the vacant waters, we were given to strange fits of hope that alternated with spells of despair—hope when we would descry a far-off light that would turn out to be merely some elusive fishy lantern—despair that our help, already too long delayed, was being retarded to the point of impotence.

The final discovery came with startling suddenness. One day, gliding slowly downward at a considerable depth, we were stopped by a hard flat barrier that spread beneath us like the sea bottom. But as we began to drift horizontally, we observed that the surface was smooth and ominously light-reflecting—and with a gasp of despair we recognized that the substance was glass!

The surprise and horror of that moment are still vivid in my memory. "Turn the searchlights down, down!" muttered the leader of our crew, in a voice that trembled perceptibly; and as the great water-piercing streamers began to quiver and shake and then

slowly descended in long, rambling curves, Aelios came rushing to my side like a child who fears to be alone, and clung closely to me while we both stared through the portholes with faces rigid and eager.

But at first we saw nothing. All was dark beneath us—not a gleam, nor a flicker, broke the blackness of the Sunken World.

Then, as the searchlights swayed and shifted till they swept the depths directly beneath, we began to make out familiar objects amid the obscurity. Dimly, strangely, as though draped in a fog, the outlines of great domes and arches and colonnades began to emerge, interspersed by Titanic columns and statuesque temples that appeared to waver uncannily.

"See! See! It is still there!" Aelios cried, frantically, as she pressed more closely to me; and with the agony of despair in her voice was mingled just a tinge of hope.

I took her hand and sought to console her; but even as I did so her whole body began to shake spasmodically, and her sobbing throbbed from end to end of the ship. For many minutes she seemed unable to speak.

Yet, even while the long-drawn, heartbreaking sobs panted forth, she began to point, to point distractedly downward, with blind, quivering fingers that called with frenzied urgency, forcing me to peer again through the porthole.

With my arms still about her, I scanned the dim, ghostly twilight. But for a moment I observed nothing alarming. Then, as my gaze became focused upon a gray dome just below, I too cried out in dread realization.

Those glass-covered depths were not without sign of life, as I had thought; but here and there a lantern-bearing object, with flapping finny body, went wavering through the windows and above the temple roofs.

THE END

Edgar Allan Poe

(b. 1809—d. 1849)

THE one hundred and twenty-fifth anniversary of the birth of Edgar Allan Poe made it an appropriate time to publish a few of his stories in our pages. Appreciation of Poe's genius is growing among students of psychology and among the class of readers who read and re-read the great pieces of literature with ever increasing enjoyment. In the Borough of the Bronx, the little cottage where the author lived for some years with his dying wife is carefully preserved by the city. It is a tragic relic of poor Poe's life. In Philadelphia there is a memorial building and in Richmond, Va., a city identified with the early years of his life, is the "Poe Shrine." Here it is that a great collection of his literary remains has accumulated and little remains extant that is not represented there.

One of the nation's highest authorities on Poe is Dr.

John W. Robertson of San Francisco. His appreciations of two of Poe's stories have added force and value, as they come from a professional psychiatrist. He says that Poe's tale, "William Wilson" is "in my opinion the most profound expression of psychological introspection ever formulated;" and says of Poe's "psychopathic story that deals with a disordered mind—"The Tell-Tale Heart"—in subtlety of conception and the simplicity of relation of a paranoid murder, it is not paralleled by any story known to me. As a study of systematized delusions, it is unsurpassed; to find its realistic equal, one must turn to our medico-legal text-books. Even among these, no more detailed description of the cunning possessed by a homicidal maniac can be found."

BABYLON

A Song of Memory

Four thousand years have come and gone,
 Dear heart, since first we met
 When Time was young in Babylon;
 Could you or I forget?
 We've trod the ageless years of Love,
 Each incarnation strange,
 Beneath the same fair moon above
 We watched the empires change.

'Twas I, the prince of Babylon,
 Of Hammurabi's line,
 Great Ishtar's sacred priestess won;
 I pledged your lips with mine:
 But ah, my dear, we've known the pain
 That sudden parting brings,
 And yet we feel that death is vain,
 For Love triumphant sings.

Long æons past, we met again,
 I warred in Cæsar's train;
 Do you recall that shady glen
 Where Pan piped his refrain?
 Life's goblet brimmed as full as when
 We loved in Babylon,
 But golden hours sped quickly then,
 And soon our day was done.

And yet once more we met, my love,
 Where regal splendor glowed,
 When Christian banners waved above,
 And Cœur de Lion rode.
 You were the Soldan's daughter fair,
 An errant knight was I,
 Love tarried but a moment there—
 Death winged the battle cry.

By
**ROBERT
 BRIDGE
 PIKE**

And now, my dear, we come at last
 Across the cycling years,
 To drink Love's wine, as in the past,
 With joy undimmed by fears:
 And while we pledge, we'll dream, dear one
 Of home with lights aglow—
 Moon-silvered, royal Babylon
 Four thousand years ago.

*In the moonlight of mem'ry come, wander to-night
 'Mid the gardens of Babylon old,
 And though dust of the centuries covers them quite
 Yet to us they yield treasures untold:
 Let us stroll once again through the halls of delight
 That we trod in Love's spring long ago;
 And your eyes, shining bright with the old tender light,
 Stir my soul as the years backward flow.*



There was a tremendous report that shattered glass throughout the bank. The heavy steel door of the bullion vault was torn from its hinges and flew out past the guard and smashed against the opposite wall with a resounding thud.

D ID you have any trouble with your radio last night, Charley?"

The bullion teller swung around to face his assistant.

"Nothing else but," he replied. "There was some kind of a tearing, roaring noise that started about seven-thirty and kept up all night, or at least until I turned in at midnight."

"I had the same trouble," Glenn Hunter replied with interest. "It seemed to center at about 450 meters, but it took in a wide band on each side and just drowned out everything. It sounded like an old type spark-gap transmitter going full blast, except that it was a steady hum instead of dots and dashes."

"That's what it sounded like all right. I hadn't thought of that, but it did have the same characteristics. I tried to tune it out by turning my loop, but I couldn't do it. The loop helped some, but the source was too near and too loud for anything to get through it."

"Moulton's set has an aerial, so I couldn't try loop tuning, but there was no use in trying to cut it out with condensers. It was such a wide band that it covered the whole dial. What do you suppose it was?"

Charley Barnett never got a chance to expound his theory, for the conversation was interrupted by a messenger who handed Hunter a telegram. He took it and tore it open.

"Listen to this," he remarked in disgust. "'Six hundred pounds gold bullion nine hundred fine consigned Federal Reserve Bank Philadelphia due West Philadelphia station nine-twenty A. M. tenth. Be ready to receive. American Railway Express.' It wasn't enough for them to shove in two thousand pounds yesterday after quitting time, they have to start before we open in the morning. Oh, well, I suppose we've got to get ready for it. Go open the bullion vault for me and see where we can put it, will you, Charley? Have that last lot of bars moved, if necessary. I want to run through

The Radio Robbery

By Captain S. P. Meek, U. S. A.

IT has long been a dream of metallurgists to conquer the science of transmutation of metals. Also it is a pet theme for writers of scientific fiction. We are well on the road to synthetic foods, why not synthetic metals? This time Capt. Meek has devised a truly ingenious method for obtaining synthetic gold, which gives the radio yet another use. The author cleverly blends science and fiction so it is hard to tell one from the other. This is an exceedingly plausible story of unusual merit.

Illustrated by MOREY

these assay reports before the stuff gets here."

Barnett took Hunter's keys and set off for the vault, whistling gaily. He nodded to the watchman on duty, entered the main vault, unlocked the door of the inner bullion vault and stepped inside. The vault was dark and he felt for the light switch and turned it. The switch clicked, but no light rewarded his efforts and he reached in his pocket for his flashlight. To his disgust, he found that he had left it in his desk, but his searching hand encountered a box of matches. He drew them out and struck one.

There was a tremendous report that shattered glass throughout the bank. The heavy steel door of the bullion vault was torn from its hinges and flew out past the guard and smashed against the opposite wall. The light-bulbs in the vault were broken by the force of the explosion and the guard was knocked unconscious. The alarm gongs throughout the bank set up a deafening clanging, and the guards rushed to their stations with drawn revolvers.

In the absence of higher officials, the cashier took charge of the situation, and under his direction a body of guards approached the vault with drawn weapons while the electrician followed them with spare bulbs. They entered the vault unresisted and new bulbs were soon lighting up the scene. The mangled body of Barnett was found beside the door of the bullion vault, badly crushed by the force with which it had been driven out. The bullion vault was apparently not injured, and so far as could be told by a hurried inventory, made by Hunter, nothing was missing.

"Of course it will take me at least an hour to make a complete inventory," he said to the cashier, "but at least the major items seem to be here intact. I'll start at once."

"Do so," replied the cashier as he hurried out to greet the police who were responding to the riot call automatically turned in by the gongs of the bank.

Hunter was busy at the inventory when the police entered.

"Have you found anything missing, Mr. Hunter?" asked the cashier.

"Not so far," he replied. "I want a couple of men to move these bars so that I can count them."

"Surely," answered the cashier. "I'll have them sent in at once. What shipment is this?"

"It's a little over two thousand pounds of nine hun-

dred and ninety fine that came in from the west last night," replied Hunter. "It's the purest stuff we have had here for some time. It's soft as butter. Just feel it."

The cashier stepped over to the pile of bars and rubbed his nail against one. In surprise, he stooped and looked at the bars closely and then drew out his pocket knife. With the blade he dug at one of the bars for a moment and then straightened up with a strained expression on his face.

"What did you say these bars were, Mr. Hunter?" he asked.

"Nine-ninety fine bullion," answered Hunter. "Why?"

The cashier stooped and scraped again at the bars.

"Did you receive these yourself, Mr. Hunter?"

"Yes. Mr. Barnett and I checked them in after closing time because the Express Company didn't want to hold over six hundred thousand dollars worth of bullion over night if they could help it."

"Mr. Hunter," said the cashier with a drawn face as he stood up, "these bars are copper."

"Copper?" exclaimed Hunter, disbelief in his voice.

THE cashier pointed silently at the pile. Hunter stepped over and looked at them. He had been handling bullion for several years and it took only a glance to assure him that the cashier was right. The bars which he had checked in the night before as gold worth thirty-five dollars an ounce were copper worth less than that many cents a pound. He straightened up, dumbfounded at the discovery.

"Can you explain this, Mr. Hunter?" asked the cashier.

"I certainly can't," replied Hunter. "Barnett and I took them in and they were gold, or at least they looked enough like it to fool both of us."

The cashier looked incredulous. A detective sergeant from the Chestnut Street station stepped forward.

"So it's robbery as well as murder," he remarked.

"Murder!" exclaimed the cashier.

"Of course it's murder," replied the sergeant. "Hunter, I guess you had better come with us. Jenkins, put the bracelets on him. It looks to me like an open and shut case."

"Wait a moment, Sergeant," exclaimed the cashier. "Mr. Hunter is one of our most trusted employees. You must be sure before you do a thing like that."

"Sure!" snorted the sergeant. "Why, it's as clear as the nose on your face. There are a few details that are hazy in my mind yet, but a little questioning at headquarters will soon clear them up."

"But you haven't any evidence, Sergeant," protested the cashier.

"How much evidence do you need?" asked the sergeant scornfully. "It's as clear to me what happened as if I had been here at the time. Who left here last yesterday? You might as well tell the truth; the watchman on duty will know."

"I left last," replied Hunter. "After we got the stuff weighed and checked in, I let Barnett go. I stayed a few minutes and calculated the assay values. I must have left about thirty minutes after he did."

"Half an hour just-gave you a nice time to fix that bomb, didn't it?" said the sergeant.

"Bomb! What are you talking about?" asked Hunter slowly.

"Oh, not a bomb, just a firecracker," replied the sergeant with heavy sarcasm. "It was just a harmless little joke on your assistant, wasn't it? I suppose he begged you to allow him to open the vault this morning, didn't he?"

"No, I asked him to do it," answered Hunter.

"Did you all hear that?" asked the sergeant triumphantly. "He admits that he sent the dead man to open the vault this morning after he had spent half an hour alone in it last night fixing up a bomb that would explode when the door was opened this morning."

"I didn't say anything of the sort," replied Hunter hotly. "What I said was——"

"Tell it to the District Attorney," replied the sergeant jeeringly. "I've got the goods on you all right."

"Sergeant, your idea is preposterous," exclaimed the cashier. "Why on earth should Mr. Hunter wish to hurt Charley Barnett?"

"What's her name?" said the sergeant suddenly to Hunter.

"Whose name?" countered Hunter.

"The skirt that you and Barnett were both chasing." Hunter colored slightly.

"I don't think her name needs to enter into it," he replied.

The sergeant turned triumphantly to the cashier.

"There's your motive," he exulted. "Jealousy is the reason back of lots of things of this sort. Even without that, half a million is enough to make most men commit murder."

"Half a million?" asked the cashier wonderingly, "I don't quite follow your line of thought."

The sergeant looked disgusted.

"It's as clear as mud, he snorted. "This guy and his partner, Barnett, framed it up to have this copper shipped here billed as gold. They timed it so that it arrived after quitting time and checked it in themselves and receipted for it. That means that the bank is held for that much gold. They probably figured out that it wouldn't be discovered for a month or so, and then they wouldn't know anything about it. So this bird can't see why he should split the pile any more than he has to, so he sends Barnett away and spends half an hour fixing up a bomb that will bust his buddy all to pieces in the morning. That gives him the whole smear and gets rid of his rival too. We'll go down to the D. A.'s office and sweat him a little and get the name of the jane and rake her in. The chances are that she knows all about it and that she'll spill the beans as soon as she finds that he's in hock. If she doesn't come clean right away, a little sweating will get it out of her."

"There is no need to sweat Mr. Hunter, as you call it, to find out the name of the girl whom he and Mr. Barnett were interested in," replied the cashier stiffly.

"She is my daughter." The sergeant looked chagrined.

"Well, maybe I am mistaken about her," he admitted grudgingly. "She may not be in on it, but that is no reason why he shouldn't bump his partner off so as to get a chance to grab both the swag and the skirt."

"I think that you are jumping at conclusions too hastily, Sergeant," said the cashier. "Mr. Hunter has been with us for a number of years and he is held in high esteem by the officers. I am sure that Mr. Fleckner, the president, will never consent to his being arrested in any such summary fashion on so little evidence."

"I don't guess that he'll get much chance to consent," replied the sergeant with a grin. "Jenkins, put those bracelets on him and take him away. Three of you men go along; he might have some pals that would try a rescue stunt."

Hunter started to protest but the cashier silenced him.

"Better go with them quietly, Glenn," he advised.

"They have the right to take you and we can't stop them. As soon as Mr. Fleckner gets here I'll tell him the whole thing and he'll have you out in a few minutes. I know very well that the whole accusation is silly, but there is no use arguing."

DESPITE the cashier's representations, the president refused to take hasty action and Hunter was still in jail when a group met in the president's office to consult about the situation. Mr. Fleckner, a gray-haired man with a stubborn jaw and a steely glitter in his eyes that bodes little good to transgressors, sat at the head of the table. Seated around the table were the Chief of Detectives from the City Hall, the sergeant who had arrested Hunter, the District Attorney, the cashier and a quietly dressed little man who so far had said little and listened much. His inconspicuousness in dress and manner would have enabled him to pass unnoticed in a crowd, yet it was evident that when he spoke, the president listened with respect and close attention.

"Sergeant," said the quiet man suddenly, "please tell your story again and tell it carefully. Be especially careful in describing Mr. Hunter's words and actions. Try to lay aside your vanity and prejudice for a moment so that we can get an idea of what really happened."

The sergeant turned red and looked to his chief as if for protection. The Chief of Detectives looked sour and turned to the speaker.

"Before this bullying goes any farther, Mr. Carnes," he said, "I want to know one thing. Are you in charge of this case, and if so, by what authority?"

"I am in charge of one phase of it," replied the little man quietly. "As far as your suspected murder goes, that is a State matter and I have nothing to say about it. As far as the robbery of the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia goes, I am in charge by the authority of the United States of America. Mr. Fleckner told you that I was sent here from the Treasury Department in Washington: it may interest you to know that I am Chief of the Federal Secret Service for this district. Here are my credentials if you care to examine them."

The Chief of Detectives glanced at the credentials offered to him, and then turned to the sergeant.

"Go ahead and tell your story, Halloran," he grunted. "Tell it straight too. This man is the real goods."

Sergeant Halloran retold his story, dwelling at length on Hunter's supposed confession about the bomb.

"That will do," said Carnes suddenly. He sat for a moment in thought and then turned to the Chief of Detectives.

"What has your Office done about tracing the gold shipment?" he asked.

The Chief consulted a memorandum which he drew from his pocket.

"The shipment looks all right," he admitted. "It was shipped from the Golconda mine, exactly the same as other shipments have been. The Golconda production of gold has been normal. They have been shipping at about the same rate for several years and they have no surplus of gold on hand. The stuff was assayed while it was held in the express company's office at the point of shipment, and it was never out of sight of an armed messenger from the time it left until it reached here. The express agent is ready to swear that he delivered gold here and that both Mr. Hunter and Mr. Barnett verified the weights in his presence. There were three guards used to bring it in and they are all old men here. They all agree that it was gold. They know the difference between gold and copper too, for we tested them."

"Did anyone leave the building after Hunter and Barnett last night?" asked Carnes.

"No one," replied the president. "I have the complete records of the door guard here. After the express people left, there was an eleven-minute interval before Mr. Barnett left. Thirty-seven minutes later Mr. Hunter left. He was the last one out."

"Has that vault been disturbed?" asked Carnes.

"No, it has not," replied the president. "As soon as Mr. Hunter was taken away, Mr. Moulton had the door propped in place and posted guards to see that no one entered. When I got here I confirmed his orders and had the vault left undisturbed for your examination."

"Let's look at it," remarked Carnes.

At the vault, he took merely a cursory glance around, touched the pile of copper bars negligently and then turned to Sergeant Halloran.

"Your theory is that Mr. Hunter arranged a bomb that exploded shortly after the vault was opened in the morning, isn't it?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," replied Halloran eagerly. "As far as I——"

"Answer my questions please and don't volunteer opinions," snapped Carnes. "You have done enough damage already. When you entered the vault did you smell any peculiar odor?"

"No, I didn't," replied Halloran shortly.

"Did you, Mr. Moulton?" asked Carnes turning to the cashier.

"I noticed no odor at all," replied the cashier.

"How soon after the explosion did you get here?"

"Within a minute or two."

"I thought so," remarked Carnes meditatively. "Sergeant Halloran, did you ever arrive at a place where a bomb had gone off within half an hour after it had happened?"

"Yes, several times."

"And when you did, did you ever notice an acrid odor of burned powder?"

"Yes, every time," admitted Halloran.

"And you noticed nothing of the sort here? Don't let your imagination run away with you. Did you?"

"No, sir, I did not."

"Neither did Mr. Moulton and yet he arrived at a time when the air should have been thick with smoke and the odor of burned explosive very noticeable. Strange, isn't it?"

"What has that to do with it?" interrupted the Chief of Detectives. "It is quite probable that they didn't notice it in the excitement."

"Possible, but not probable," replied Carnes. "Did you ever examine the scene of a bomb explosion?"

"Dozens of times," replied the chief.

"The local damage done at the point where the bomb lay was always quite extensive, wasn't it?"

"Certainly."

"Ah, yes," replied Carnes with a far-away look in his eyes. "Also fragments of the container can usually be found embedded in the walls. I don't seem to observe any here. Perhaps you will point out to me just where the bomb lay that exploded this morning."

The detective was silenced.

"I fancy that we are through with Sergeant Halloran for the present," remarked Carnes. "If the rest of you gentlemen will join me in Mr. Fleckner's office, we can discuss the matter further."

"Are you of the opinion that there was no bomb, Mr. Carnes?" asked the District Attorney when the conference reassembled, minus Sergeant Halloran.

"It was not a bomb," replied Carnes positively.

"What in Heaven's name caused the explosion then?" asked the president.

"I don't know," said Carnes thoughtfully. "In fact there are several puzzling features about the case. I am sure that it was not a bomb or any usual explosive that did the damage. It acted like a gas explosion, but there are no gas mains in the building and to introduce enough gas to cause an explosion of that magnitude into the vault by any means other than a pipe would require several heavy bulky cylinders that could not be hidden, and no such things have entered or left the building. Further, I can see no object in causing an explosion."

"Sergeant Halloran's theory is——" said the Chief of Detectives.

"We can eliminate that," interrupted Carnes. "I am sure that gold was delivered here last night. A shipment of copper might have fooled one man, but unless two express messengers and three bank guards were in on it as well as Hunter, Barnett and the express agent, it wouldn't be possible. I believe that the gold was delivered and stolen from the vault last night after Hunter left. I am inclined to think that Hunter knows no more about it than we do."

"All the same we'll hold him for a while," replied the District Attorney.

"Suit yourself," said Carnes with a shrug. "If I were you, I'd turn him loose and if I suspected him, I'd have him shadowed. However, that's your business and I don't want to butt in."

The District Attorney smiled.

"Now, Chief," Carnes went on, addressing him, "the Secret Service can cover the matter of that shipment and the express messengers more thoroughly than your men can. If you really want to cooperate, put your best men on the task of running down the past history of every guard who was on duty here last night."

"I'll be glad to," replied the Chief of Detectives as he and the District Attorney rose to leave. "The entire resources of my Office are at your service."

"Thank you," replied Carnes as he bowed slightly.

"Mr. Moulton," he went on as the remaining three reseated themselves, "Sergeant Halloran indicated in the course of his remarks that both Hunter and Barnett were interested in your daughter. How much of that may be true and how much may be his imagination, you know better than I. However, just as a matter of form, I would like to have a talk with her."

"As far as her knowing anything about the robbery is concerned, of course there is no truth in it," replied the cashier shortly. "As far as the interest of the two men in her goes, she can tell you how far it had gone better than I can. If you care to interview her, I will call her."

"There is no need for that," said Carnes. "I will be glad to go to your home and talk to her there."

"She is in the building," replied the cashier. "She has been for some time waiting a chance to intercede for Glenn Hunter. I can call her in a moment."

Carnes nodded assent and the cashier went out, returning in a few minutes with a strikingly handsome girl. She was about nineteen, of a slim and graceful build that just escaped being too slender. Her firmly modeled chin gave the lie to her dreamy eyes, but Carnes, as he glanced at her, shrewdly surmised that the recent tears which it was evident that she had shed might account for some of the mistiness that marked them. He sprang to his feet as she entered and bowed deeply in acknowledgment of her father's introduction.

"Sit down, Miss Moulton, please," he exclaimed holding a chair for her. His voice sounded all politeness and concern, and Fleckner smiled to himself as he saw that Carnes had placed her chair so that she sat facing the light, while his own face was in shadow.

SHE seated herself as he requested and with folded hands awaited his questions. Carnes seemed at a loss as to how to begin.

"Miss Moulton," he said hesitatingly, "it seem that one of your friends, Mr. Hunter, has been arrested by the local police as a suspect in connection with the death of Mr. Barnett. Some of the city detectives seem to think that jealousy may have been a contributing factor in the affair. In order to clear up the situation, would you mind telling me what you know about both of these men?"

"Glenn had no reason for jealousy and he knew it," replied Alice Moulton in a calm monotone that hinted at inward agitation. "Both he and Charley Barnett have been quite regular visitors at my father's house for nearly a year, and about two months ago both of them proposed to me. I refused to give an answer to either of them at the time and told them that I would decide later. Last night I accepted Glenn and, while he was present, I telephoned Charley and told him my decision. He apparently took it quite calmly, and when he learned that Glenn was there, he asked to talk to him and congratulated him very nicely. Despite their rivalry, they have always been the best of friends. So you can see that the idea of jealousy is absurd."

"Mr. Hunter was at your house last night?"

"Yes, he was. He came in after supper, about eight I should say, and stayed until after eleven."

"What were you doing?" asked Carnes. "I beg your pardon," he went on hastily. "You need not answer that question. It is quite evident what a newly engaged couple would do under the circumstances."

The ghost of a smile hovered for an instant on Alice Moulton's lips.

"We weren't doing what you might suspect," she said. "I have no objections to answering. In point of fact, we were trying to play the radio."

"Trying to?"

"Yes, but we couldn't get anything. There was a peculiar buzzing noise that drowned out every station, and neither Glenn nor I could tune it out. It started about seven-thirty, before he came in, and it was still going when he left. Of course, we weren't working with the radio all the time, but we turned it on at least a dozen times and tried to get something, but we never succeeded."

"Do you know anything about Mr. Hunter's circumstances?" asked Carnes.

"Naturally, I do," she replied. "He inherited quite a little money from his father and he has added to it by wise investments. At the present time he has an income aside from his salary of nearly four thousand dollars a year."

"Of course you believe him innocent of this whole business?"

"Of course," she said hotly. "The idea of his guilt is ridiculous. Why on earth should he do a thing like

that? He had no cause for jealousy of Charley as I have told you. As far as robbery goes, he has a good income as it is, and he knows very well that I would never consent to share any stolen money with him. I know that he's innocent and I came down here to see Daddy and Mr. Fleckner and see if they couldn't get him out of jail. Won't you help me? Surely you don't believe him guilty?"

"No, I don't," replied Carnes. "I'd release him at once if it were in my power, but unfortunately it isn't. Don't cry, my dear," he went on hastily as Alice Moulton's lips began to quiver, "just keep a stiff upper lip and I think that we'll have him out of jail soon."

"Do you really think so?" she exclaimed gratefully.

"Oh, Mr. Carnes, I'll love you forever if you do."

"That's plenty of inducement to make me do my best," he answered gallantly. "Now the best thing that you can do is to go home with your father and lie down and try to get a little rest. You can't do any good here. Mr. Moulton, you take her home. I'll place her under arrest and appoint you a deputy to take charge of her and produce her when called for. If Sergeant Halloran or any of his cohorts try to get to her, tell them that she is under federal arrest and that you can't let them talk to her without my permission. It'll be a cold day in August when they get it."

When Alice and her father had gone, Carnes turned to the president.

"Mr. Fleckner," he remarked, "this case has me puzzled. For all my shortness to Halloran, I thought that possibly there might be something to his theory, but Miss Moulton's statement seems to upset it thoroughly by removing the motive. Of course, I'll check up on her statements, but they are undoubtedly true. Frankly, I can't explain a good many things we need to know. First there is the matter of that gold shipment. Either there was a widespread conspiracy with a lot of people in it, in which case it will be easy to trace it down, or else gold was delivered here last night. In that case, what became of it? Also why did the person or persons who removed it go to the trouble to replace it with bars of copper that are identical in appearance with the purloined gold?"

"Second there is the explosion. It might have been designed to get Hunter as well as to get Barnett unless Hunter planted it, a thing I am not yet ready to admit. Also what kind of an explosive was it? It had apparently no center of brisance and it left no fumes or odor and no fragments of container. Also how did it get in? These questions all have to be answered before we are in a position to even start a search for the thieves. With your permission, I'll look at that vault again."

This time Carnes did not content himself with the cursory glance around that he had given the vault on his first visit, but went over it inch by inch in search of clues, even examining the floor and walls with a magnifying glass and sounding every square inch of walls, floor and ceiling. At the end of three hours he returned to the president's office.

"What did you find, Mr. Carnes?" asked Fleckner.

"Nothing," he replied. "I have been over every inch of that vault, searching for a means of egress for the gold or ingress for the explosive and I have found absolutely nothing. I know as much as I did when I started in and no more. The case is beyond my depth."

"What are you planning to do?"

"Call for help," replied Carnes with a wry smile. "There are some aspects of the case that point to the need of more specialized knowledge than I possess. I am going to call up Washington and ask that Dr. Bird of the Bureau of Standards be sent down here."

"Who is he?"

"One of the ablest research men in the Bureau," replied Carnes, "and one who doesn't confine his research to the regular routine. For instance, he knows more about blood stains and dust explosions, to mention only two specialties of his, than any other man in America. He has helped us out several times on counterfeiting cases. When he comes, I want him introduced as a representative of the *Washington Post*. No one but you and I are to know his real identity."

"How soon will he get here?" asked the president. "If I can get in touch with my chief, he will make arrangements for him to get a plane at Bolling Field and he will be here inside of three hours. Can we get into the bank tonight?"

"Telephone me as soon as he arrives and I'll meet you at the bank."

"Fine," replied Carnes. "Now may I use your Washington wire?"

THREE hours later a plane roared to a landing at the Philadelphia Navy Yard and Carnes greeted the passenger. Dr. Bird was grossly misnamed. There was nothing of the bird in his appearance, if one except the ostrich. He stood well over six feet in height and was broad and burly in proportion. His prognathous jaw and unruly shock of curly hair gave him the air of a prizefighter, and it was not until an observer noticed his hands that the scientist stood revealed. Long slender delicate hands they were; the hands of a musician or a sleight-of-hand performer, with long tapering sensitive fingers stained in splotches by acid.

"Hello, Carnes," he roared in a bull-like voice, "what have you got on tap this time? Another counterfeiting case?"

"Not this time, Doctor," replied Carnes as he hastened forward to grip the outstretched hand. "This time it's robbery, with possible murder."

"Good," ejaculated the Doctor, "murders are always interesting. Glad I brought my traveling laboratory. I can't see where I would come in on a robbery though."

"This is a rather unusual robbery," replied Carnes as he picked up two of the four bags that the pilot had unloaded from the plane. "I think that you'll find it interesting."

"All of your cases are unusual, even the most commonplace ones when you get stuck," snorted the Doctor. "If you chaps would just manage to learn a little elementary chemistry you would save me a lot of wild-cat trips of this nature."

"Every man to his trade, Doctor," answered Carnes cheerfully. "You would be broken-hearted if we didn't call on you occasionally. Come along, I've got a taxi waiting, and we'll stop and feed you five cups of black coffee before we go to the bank."

"All right, if it's good coffee," replied the Doctor as he picked up the remaining bags and followed Carnes.

When they arrived at the bank, Fleckner met them and was anxious to give all the details, but the Doctor stopped him impatiently.

"I don't want to hear a thing about it, just now," he announced. "Carnes tells me that there are certain scientific aspects involved and I want to approach the problem with my mind unencumbered with details of what you have done and theories you have propounded. I'll ask questions as I need to."

As they entered the vault the Doctor stopped and sniffed like a fox-terrier.

"Explosion, eh?" he remarked to Carnes. "Where was the stuff planted?"

"That's one thing for you to tell me, Doctor," replied Carnes. "I have been over every inch of the vault and there are no signs of a local center of brisance."

"No signs of a container either, I suppose?"

Carnes replied in the negative.

"Hum," said the Doctor, "that eliminates a nitrogen carrying explosive. I could smell traces of the fumes yet if one had been used. My nose is exceptionally sensitive to nitrogen oxides. Did you find any gas pipes?"

"There is no gas in the building and I have tapped every inch of the floor, walls and ceiling and there is no place for the entrance of gas."

"It was a gas explosion all the same," replied the Doctor positively. "Was there a recording thermometer or hygrometer in the vault?"

The president pointed silently to the two instruments. "Probably wrecked by the explosion," remarked the Doctor as he picked them up. "No they're not, they're still working. Let's see the dials."

He studied the dials for some minutes in silence, apparently making some mental calculations. He took a steel tape from his pocket and measured the vault carefully and made some elaborate calculations on a pocket pad.

"What is that stuff?" he said, suddenly pointing to the pile of copper bars.

"That stuff was checked in by the bullion teller, Hunter, for gold last night," replied Carnes, "and this morning after the explosion, it turns out to be copper. Hunter is under arrest for robbery and murder."

"Why murder?"

"His assistant was killed by the explosion. You'd better let me tell you the whole story, Doctor," said Carnes.

"All right, go ahead, I might as well let you get it out of your system, before you blow up under the strain of holding it," he replied seating himself on the copper bars and preparing to listen.

"Have you any report on the bank guards?" he asked when Carnes had finished his story.

"Nothing definite. The three who carried in the bars are all retired enlisted men of the Army with excellent reputations."

"What about the shipment?"

"Regular in every way. The stuff was assayed and was in sight of an armed messenger from that time on. One of the messengers who traveled with it has been with the express company for twenty years. The other one has only been with them for about a year and we are working on his record, but so far it has been perfectly clear."

"What was Hunter doing last night?"

"He was with his fiancée. He managed to get engaged to the daughter of the cashier here last night and he spent the evening with her. She tells a yarn about trying to work the radio most of the evening and hitting a lot of static, but I expect we know what they were doing all right."

"Static?" asked the Doctor sharply. "Was there any bad weather here last night?"

"It was a calm beautiful night," replied the president.

"Funny time to have static trouble," remarked the Doctor.

"I don't know that she said that it was static," answered Carnes. "She said it was a buzzing noise that prevented them from getting anything and I took it for static."

"Buzzing noise?" said the Doctor. "On what wave length?"

"I don't remember her saying anything about that."

"Call her up and find out."

Carnes returned in a few minutes.

"It was all over the dial, but seemed worst about 450 meters," he reported.

The Doctor consulted a table that he drew from his pocket.

"Funny," he commented. "Carnes, what did you say

the names of those Express Company messengers were?"

"I didn't say," replied Carnes, "but the name of the older man is Fowler and the younger is named Wallace."

"Wallace?" asked the Doctor, "Is he a hunchback?"

"No, indeed, he's quite tall and very straight."

"It can't be the same man then, although it might explain a great deal," he said. He paced the floor for a few moments muttering the name "Wallace" under his breath. Suddenly he turned to Carnes.

"I may be crazy or I may not," he said. "At any rate there is more to this case than appears on the surface. Carnes, go out and buy me a radio set. Any sort of a two or three tube set will do, provided it works on a loop. Get tubes and batteries and everything needed to put it in operation. Also get me a hacksaw and a half dozen blades and a bottle of strong ammonia."

WHILE Carnes was gone, the Doctor busied himself in taking from the cases he had brought with him several instruments and setting them up on a table. By the time he had finished, Carnes arrived loaded with bundles.

"All right, Carnes," he said, "give me the saw and the ammonia and set up your set. When you get it in operation, tune in any local station to make sure that it's working right and then set it at 450 meters and let it alone. I'm going to examine these bars."

He moistened his handkerchief with ammonia and rubbed the surface of one of the bars briskly. When the handkerchief had turned blue he examined it carefully under a binocular microscope, but turned away with an exclamation of disappointment. He took the hacksaw and sawed one of the bars in halves and scrutinized the sawn surface under a powerful glass. Again he muttered his disappointment and took up a pinch of the copper dust made by the saw. This he dissolved in an acid that he drew from one of his bags and put the solution in a small glass tube which he set up in one of his instruments. A moment later a tinny arc began to spark behind the tube, and simultaneously the radio set gave off a raucous tearing sound.

"Shut that thing off," he directed as he applied his eye to an eyepiece projecting from the instrument. As he did so, he emitted a low whistle of surprise and consulted a book which he took from the instrument carrying case. He whistled again and looked long and earnestly through the instrument. Again and again he adjusted it, testing it with standard solutions taken from one of his cases, but his astonishment grew momentarily more manifest.

"What is it?" asked the president breathlessly.

"What? Oh, that? That's a simple electric arc spectroscopie. When you volatilize an element in the arc, it gives a certain characteristic set of colored lines on the prism. Every element has its own set and no two are alike. It's one of the most certain methods of detecting small traces of a foreign element. Those bars are copper all right, but the lines aren't quite in place. Keep still a minute and let me think."

For some minutes he paced the floor.

"It isn't possible," he said at length, "and yet it must be. At any rate, we'll have to take a chance on it. Carnes, my arrival in Philadelphia must be kept a complete secret. This is very important. In the meantime go home and take that radio set with you. Where are you staying?"

"At the 'Benjamin Franklin.'"

"Good. Stick close to your room phone so that I can reach you. In the meantime keep that radio set tuned in on 450 meters and let me know at once if it gives out a squawk like we heard to-night when my spec. was running. Make arrangements for garage room for a truck that will come up from Camp Vail in the afternoon.

Better arrange to have it kept at Frankford Arsenal out in Bridesburg. That's out of the way and it's a government installation. Mr. Fleckner, remember that no one must know of my arrival. In the meantime you will give this story to the press and see that it is headlined."

He wrote rapidly for a few minutes and handed the paper to the president. He took it and read it aloud with a puzzled expression.

"Officials of the Philadelphia Federal Reserve Bank, in an attempt to solve the mystery surrounding the theft of over a ton of gold bullion, to-day sawed in halves one of the bars of copper that was found in the vault. This led to the discovery that there was a core of pure gold about one inch in diameter in the center of it. The balance of the bars will be sawed tomorrow. In the meantime, a scientist from the Bureau of Standards has been sent for and will arrive sometime to-morrow afternoon."

"That's correct," said the Doctor. "Now hold that until afternoon, but be sure that it makes the late editions. I don't want it to appear on the streets before five. If you could manage to have it published in an extra about six-thirty, that would be all the better."

"Is there gold in the center of that bar?" asked Carnes in astonishment.

"No, unfortunately, there isn't, but it won't hurt to publish that. Can you arrange to get that story out as I want it?"

"There will be no trouble about that," replied the president. "I own a good deal of stock in the Bulletin and I'll arrange to have an extra on the streets at six-thirty sharp. But I don't understand what it's all about."

"If I'm right, you will to-morrow. If I'm wrong you probably never will," replied the Doctor with a laugh. "Now let's go to bed and get some sleep. We may not have any to-morrow night."

"What shall we do in the meantime?" asked the president.

"Each of you do what I told you to do. Aside from that, don't talk, keep your mouths shut and say nothing. I'll be at the 'Bellevue-Stratford,' registered as Walter Griffen."

The day passed slowly for Carnes. Early in the morning he telephoned Frankford Arsenal and made arrangements for keeping the Camp Vail truck. With nothing to do, he sat in his room and listened in vain for the tearing sound from his radio. He had a strong desire to telephone the 'Bellevue-Stratford,' but his previous association with Dr. Bird tended to discourage him. The Doctor always preferred to work in an atmosphere of mystery in order, as he put it, "to be able to revel in his successes and to bury his failures."

At six he left his room long enough to snatch a bite to eat. As he left the restaurant a newsboy came down the street crying an extra. Carnes bought one and read, under huge headlines, an elaboration of the item the Doctor had written the night before. He hastened back to his hotel in hopes of a message, but none awaited him and his telephone was silent until nearly seven-thirty. Then it rang and he literally jumped for the receiver.

"Is that you, Carnes?" asked the voice at the other end of the wire. "This is Griffen. We'll pick you up at the corner of Ninth and Chestnut in about fifteen minutes. Watch out for an army truck and board it."

When Carnes boarded the truck, which slowed down for him, he found Fleckner and Dr. Bird in the covered body with two men dressed in the olive drab of the army. A glance forward showed him that the driver also wore a uniform.

"Hello, Carnes," said the Doctor. "Make yourself at

home. This is Sergeant Welman of the Signal Corps, one of the best radio direction finders that the army has. Give Carnes a headset, Sergeant, he might as well get in on the fun."

"What is it all about?" asked Carnes as he adjusted the headset and began to receive WIP's evening programme.

"You'll find out in time," replied Dr. Bird with a chuckle. "Meanwhile, enjoy the music and listen for anything unusual."

The truck wandered aimlessly up and down the streets and Carnes settled himself to wait. He saw that all of the other occupants of the truck were wearing headsets which were connected to a large receiver surmounted by a loop that stood on an elevated platform built in the center of the truck. From time to time, the Sergeant would adjust the dials of the receiver, tuning in a new station, only to tune it out again in a few minutes. Half an hour passed in this way and then the Sergeant turned to Doctor Bird.

"Are you sure that you have that wave-length right?" he asked.

"It's right as nearly as Miss Moulton could tell me. If it shows up at all, we ought to get it for she said that it covered the whole dial."

"It seems funny that more people didn't hear it," remarked the Sergeant.

"If it's what I think it is, it would be very easily trapped," replied the Doctor. "It was probably a high carrier wave that came down only at intervals. Of course I may be—What's that?"

"That" was a peculiar rending, tearing sound in the headsets that drowned out everything else.

"Stop her," called the Sergeant to the driver. He removed his headset and held it at some distance from his ear while he manipulated the loop mounted on top of the receiver. The sound increased in intensity and the Sergeant began to work on his fine adjustment. For several minutes Carnes could detect no difference in the intensity of the sound and at last even the Sergeant was satisfied. A flashlight glowed for an instant.

"Fifty-three-point-six, uncorrected," he announced. "Got the location, Kelley?"

His companion grunted an assent and the Sergeant called to the driver.

"Take the next turn to your left and go straight ahead."

The truck had not moved over two blocks before the sound suddenly died out.

"It's stopped," said the Sergeant.

"I doubt it," replied the Doctor. "Driver, go back a couple of blocks and see if we can pick it up again."

The truck retraced its path and again the tearing sound dominated all others.

"That's what I suspected," said the Doctor. "Go ahead, driver. We'll just have to hunt for another spot where we can locate it."

As the truck drove on, Kelley carefully set an angle with a protractor and laid off a line on a chart which Carnes saw was a map of Philadelphia. The truck drove on for several miles.

"Stop," called the Sergeant.

Carnes listened carefully and could detect a faint hum of the same nature as the sound they had plotted. The locating performance was repeated and when the second line had been laid off the Sergeant showed the chart to Dr. Bird.

"Too acute an angle for good work," he remarked. "We'd better try to get another shot."

The Doctor nodded and the truck set off again. For nearly an hour it cruised around without result.

"Where does Moulton live?" asked the Doctor suddenly.

"On Judson Street," replied Fleckner.

"Somewhere in the vicinity of Tioga and Twenty-second."

"Good enough," commented the Doctor. "Driver, go north on Broad Street to Tioga and then turn left to Twenty-second."

At Tioga and Twenty-second, the receiver was still mute, but as the truck crossed Twenty-third, the tearing noise again broke forth.

"Stop," called the Sergeant.

The new line was plotted and the Sergeant studied the map.

"I'm satisfied," he announced. "That transmitter is located on Chestnut Street between Eleventh and Twelfth."

"It should be near the bank," muttered the Doctor. "Driver, take us to the corner of Eleventh and Chestnut."

"What's this all about?" asked Fleckner as the truck set off again.

"This is a radio locator truck from Camp Vail," explained the Sergeant. "We are locating the source of that sound you heard in your headset. This is a very sensitive receiver equipped with a loop and by turning it until we get the maximum intensity of sound, we are able to lay off a line on which the sending station must be. By getting several of these lines from different points, we are able to locate the transmitter. It must be at the intersection of the lines."

"I can see that," replied Fleckner, "but what has it to do with this case?"

"I don't know, sir," said the Sergeant. "My orders from Dr. Bird were to locate the set and that's all I know."

Dr. Bird volunteered no information and Fleckner relapsed into silence. The truck stopped at length at the corner of Eleventh and Chestnut and the Doctor climbed out, followed by the Sergeant, who carried what looked like a suitcase with a loop on top in his hand.

"Come on, Carnes," called the Doctor. "I think we are going to find our man now. You can come too, Mr. Fleckner, if you aren't afraid of a little gun play."

"Don't you think you had better explain just a little," Doctor?" asked Carnes.

"I haven't time now. Listen and get this straight. Sergeant Welman will lead us to a door on the opposite side of which will be the sending set that we have been locating. We will break down that door and enter. I have a blank search-warrant that will cover us if we make a mistake. When we enter, arrest every one in the place. They may try to resist. If the man that I suspect is at the head of it, I am sure they will. Get them, but above all, don't let them destroy any apparatus. I know what I am doing, Carnes. Just obey orders and everything will be all right."

As they started down the street, Sergeant Welman adjusted a small pair of headphones attached to the case he was carrying to his ears and took the lead. From time to time he would set the case down, make a few adjustments and then resume his onward progress. Before a large office building he paused and then stepped in through the entranceway. Up the stairs he led them and down a corridor, stopping with increasing frequency to work on the case. At last he paused before a closed door and pointed silently. The group listened and could hear a faint crackling hum from behind the door. The Doctor drew his automatic and motioned to Carnes to do likewise. Carnes drew his gun and the Doctor, motioning him to follow closely, took hold of the handle of the door and tried it. It yielded to his touch and with a sudden effort, he thrust it open and entered, Carnes and Fleckner following on his heels.

A CURIOUS scene met their gaze. The room was in semi-darkness save where it was illuminated by a reading lamp set on a table. At the table sat two men bending over a piece of apparatus from which a flickering blue light came, accompanied by the crackling noise that they had heard outside. The room smelled strongly of garlic.

As they entered, the two men sprang to their feet. The nearer one wore some sort of a uniform, but no one noticed him, for the other figure completely dominated the scene. He was a man who might have been tall had he been straight, but whose hunched back reduced his stature to a bare four feet. His short bandy legs formed a striking contrast to huge arms that hung nearly to his knees. Topping this misshapen body was the face of a Grecian God, thin almost to emaciation. Huge black eyes like two burned holes in a blanket regarded the intruders with merciless intensity.

"Good evening, Doctor Wallace," said Dr. Bird as he stepped forward. "I rather thought that I would find you at the bottom of this. So far as I know, you are the only man in the United States with the imagination to conceive a scheme like this or the brains to carry it out."

The lips of Dr. Wallace curled in a thin-lipped wicked smile.

"Why didn't I kill you before I started this?" he said softly to Dr. Bird. "I should have known that if I were the only man able to carry out my experiment, that you would be the only one who would be able to solve it."

"That's where you did make a mistake," replied Dr. Bird lightly. "Hold on there!" he cried suddenly and sprang forward.

His movement was quick, but Wallace moved like a cat. Before Bird could stop him he had reached the wall and closed an electric switch. There was an explosion and the instrument that had been on the table flew to pieces. Carnes and Bird stood paralyzed for a moment by the crash, but were galvanized into action as the explosion was followed by the vicious cracking of a pistol that Wallace had drawn from his pocket. Dr. Bird's pistol dropped from a bleeding hand, but Carnes' gun woke to life. As it spat forth its message of death, Wallace swayed for an instant and then pitched forward on his face. Carnes kept both Wallace and his companion covered while he backed toward the wall and groped for a light switch. Fleckner interpreted the movement correctly and aided him and an instant later the scene was brilliantly illuminated.

Wallace lay face downward in a pool of blood while his companion stood with blanched face and elevated hands. Dr. Bird ran forward and bent over the prostrate Wallace.

"Are you hurt badly, Wallace?" he asked.

"You've done for me all right," said Wallace in a choking voice, blowing flecks of bloody froth from his lips. "Punctured lung, I think. Damn you, Bird, you were too clever. I left you out of my calculations. How much do you know?"

"I know a great deal," replied Dr. Bird, "but some things puzzle me yet. If you are dying, why don't you make a clean breast of it?"

"What do you want to know?" asked Wallace.

"How did you get your synthetic gold into the bank as a Golconda shipment?"

"That was easy. My brother there," he paused and pointed to his companion, "got a position about a year ago as an express messenger and he rode with the shipment. In the same car were eight boxes of books which really contained my stuff. He gave the other messenger knockout drops and switched the bars."

"Simple," commented Carnes.

"How did you polymerize that copper?" asked Dr. Bird.

The ghost of a smile appeared on Wallace's face.

"I expect that you would like to know," he said, "but you'll never find out. My brother doesn't know and I destroyed my apparatus as soon as I finished. This is my dying statement and I want to make it clear that I was the brains of the whole scheme. My brother was just a tool in my hands. As soon as I heard that you were summoned, I wired my disintegrator with a charge of explosive inside and you saw the result. You will never be able to reconstruct it. I made only one mistake. I miscalculated the force of my disintegrating ray. It didn't go deep enough."

"Yes it did," replied Dr. Bird. "That newspaper story was one that I gave out in the hope of getting you to start your apparatus up again. You did a good job the first time."

"Fooled, by God!" exclaimed Wallace as he strove to rise to a sitting position. "Damn you, Bird—"

THE sentence ended in a bubbling grunt. The blood gushed from Wallace's lips and his head fell forward. Dr. Bird leaned forward and listened at the chest of the prostrate man for a moment and then rose to his feet.

"There, gentlemen," he said dramatically, "lies the body of one of the most brilliant geniuses of this generation."

He removed his hat and bowed to the prostrate figure.

"Put cuffs on your prisoner, Carnes, and come along. We're going up to the District Attorney's office. I had a little chat with him when I got my search-warrant and he is waiting for us. He has Hunter up there, also the future Mrs. Hunter and her father. I'll explain there."

In the District Attorney's office a half hour later, Dr. Bird leaned back chewing at a cigar.

"Doctor Frederick Wallace," he began, "was the most brilliant scientist of this generation, but he had a criminal twist in his mind. How far his physical misfortunes warped his morality is hard to tell. He may have been more to be pitied than blamed. He worked at the Bureau for some time, but his ideas were far above our routine work and he quit. I lost track of him and hadn't thought of him for several years when this case came up.

"When I got to the bank and looked around, I realized, of course, that the explosion was caused by gas, but my sense of smell is unusually acute and I could detect no trace of any unusual odor. Then I looked at the recording hygrometer and the answer was plain. You gentlemen probably know that when hydrogen gas is mixed with air, it explodes quite violently, giving as its only product of explosion, water vapor. The hygrometer showed a sudden great increase in the amount of water vapor in the air immediately after the explosion and I knew that it was caused by hydrogen gas. The next thing was to find out how it got in there.

"I discarded the idea of a pipe, for Carnes assured me that there was none and I know what a careful investigator he is. The next thing that attracted my attention was that pile of copper bars and I figured that there must be some connection. Where the gold got out and that copper got in, hydrogen gas could get in too. I hadn't an idea, so I started asking the first things that came into my mind. Carnes mentioned that radios had given trouble the night before. I knew that it was a perfect night for reception in Washington and Mr. Fleckner assured me that it was a fine night here. Besides the description was not that of static, and the combination set me to thinking.

"I don't know why I asked Carnes the names of the

express messengers who rode with the shipment, but I did and when he said 'Wallace,' it brought to my mind some experiments that Dr. Wallace had been working on, but the whole idea seemed too weird for credence. However, I could see no other solution and I took a chance.

"Now to properly explain this, I must give you a little science. You may have heard of the periodic table of the chemical elements. In any case, it is a method of arranging the elements in the order of their ascending atomic weights in such a manner that elements of like properties fall into groups. The group that attracted my attention was the second, which contains among other elements, copper with an atomic weight of 63.6 and gold with a weight of 197. If we multiply 63.6 by three and add six, we get practically the atomic weight of gold. The atomic weight of hydrogen, by the way, is 1,008. Here we have the three elements entering into the problem, two definitely connected in a common chemical ratio, namely, three and six.

"While he was in the Bureau, Wallace was working on the problem of synthesis and analysis of elements. If it were possible, as he used to contend, to polymerize copper and to add the right amount of hydrogen and energy, one might get gold or something resembling it. Such a synthesis might easily be unstable and might easily disintegrate under the influence of a wave length of exceeding shortness. If it did disintegrate, the products would be copper and hydrogen gas.

"I sent Carnes out for a radio set to find out whether the spark that I suspected was working, but it was not. Then I sawed one of the bars and subjected the copper to a spectroscopic test. The copper lines were there all right, but they were somewhat distorted and I felt sure that I was on the right track."

"But why should a man want to destroy gold after he had made it?" asked the District Attorney.

"He wouldn't unless it were so unstable that it was slowly disintegrating by itself," replied the Doctor. "I suspect that it was. Am I right, Wallace?"

The prisoner nodded.

"My brother made gold all right from copper, but it soon changed back. We didn't know what to do, so he suggested that I get a position as express messenger and change a shipment of true gold with our false gold. I did so. He knew that his gold would start to go to copper in a short time and in order to remove any traces, he set his apparatus up near the bank and kept it going all night."

"What sort of an apparatus was it?" asked the Doctor.

"I don't know the details, but it generated an exceedingly short wave that traveled like a radio wave except that he could control the direction. It was made from an electric spark. He thought that he had directed the waves from the spark straight up, but they must have

come down again. The short wave he did control. It wouldn't affect real gold, but it broke down our false gold rapidly."

"That was the way I had it figured out," replied the Doctor. "That was why I had that story put in the paper. I thought that when Dr. Wallace saw it, that he would start his machine again and I sent to Camp Vail for a radio locator truck to trace its location down. The rest of it you know."

"But that doesn't get the gold back," remarked Mr. Fleckner.

"I think that I can take care of that," said the Doctor. "Frank Wallace here is an accomplice all right, but he was not the brains of the steal and I fancy he is thoroughly sick of the whole affair. I am sure that he had no hand in the death of Barnett."

"I certainly hadn't," broke in Wallace, "and my brother never intended anything of the sort. He was not a murderer. He was all broken up when he heard of it. Barnett must have been smoking or else he lighted a match or something like that."

"Do you know where the gold is?"

"Yes, I do."

"Mr. Fleckner," said the Doctor, "in case Mr. Wallace would agree to lead you to the gold and you found it intact, how would you look at the matter? Would you not feel rather disinclined to press a prosecution?"

The president considered the matter in silence for a few moments.

"I think that I would," he replied at length.

"I'll be glad to tell you where it is anyway," exclaimed Wallace. "I don't ever want to see it again."

"Well," remarked the District Attorney, "I guess that closes the case. I wouldn't dare to go to trial with a yarn like that anyway, I'd be laughed out of court. Mr. Hunter, you are released from arrest. Let me be the first to congratulate you on your clearance from the charges that threatened you."

"It's too bad that Miss Moulton turned you down, Hunter," said Carnes with a twinkle in his eye.

"Turned me down?" asked Hunter with a blank stare.

"Why, I didn't!" exclaimed Alice Moulton indignantly.

"My mistake," remarked Carnes with a grin. "I thought that she agreed to love me forever if I cleared you."

"I did, but you didn't clear him," laughed Alice in relief. "I think that if I love anyone, it ought to be Doctor Bird."

"I am afraid that Doctor Bird would be more pleased at that than his wife would be," replied Carnes. "In point of fact, I'd have to relinquish my claims to your affections, even if you offered them."

"I am afraid that Mrs. Carnes and both of the children would object."

THE END.

The Malignant Entity

By Otis Adelbert Kline

SCIENTISTS and inventors have made enormous strides for—and in many ways against—humanity, for they have discovered and invented powerful destructive materials—in that way sometimes courting their own destruction. So many “impossible” things have been done, why is it not possible that the venture into the realms of the infinite may some time prove fruitful—that some day life may be implanted in unorganized matter? “The Malignant Entity” is the story of such a venture—carried to a dreadful success. This is a gripping tale, marvelously well told. Read it.

I TELL you, Evans,” said Dr. Dorp, banging his fist on the arm of his chair for emphasis, “the science of psychology is in much the same stage of development today as were the material sciences in the dark ages.”

“But surely,” I objected, “the two centuries of investigation just past have yielded some fruit. It cannot be that the eminent men who have devoted the greater part of their lives to this fascinating subject have labored in vain.”

The doctor stroked his iron-gray Van Dyke meditatively.

“With a few—a very few exceptions, I’m afraid they have,” he replied, “at least so far as their own deductions from observed phenomena are concerned.”

“Take Sir Oliver Lodge, for example—” I began.

“The conclusions of Sir Oliver will serve as an excellent example for my analogy,” said the doctor. “No doubt you are familiar with the results of his years of painstaking psychical research as expounded in his books.”

“I believe he has become a convert to spiritism,” I replied.

“With all due respect to Sir Oliver,” said the doctor, “I should say that he has rather singled out such facts as suited his purpose and assembled them as evidence to support the spiritistic theory. It may seem paradoxical to add that I believe he has always been thoroughly conscientious in his investigations and sincere in his deductions.”

“I’m afraid I do not quite follow you.”

“There are times in the life of every man,” continued the doctor, “when emotion dethrones reason. At such crisis the most keen-witted of scientists may be blinded to truth by the overpowering influence of his own desires. Sir Oliver lost a beloved son. Only those who have suffered similar losses can appreciate the keen anguish that followed his bereavement, or sympathize with his intense longing to communicate with Raymond. Most men are creatures of their desires. They believe what they want to believe. Under the circumstance it was not difficult for a clever psychic to read the mind of the scientist and tell him the things he wanted to hear.”

“But what of the many investigators who have not been similarly influenced?” I inquired. “Surely they must have found some basis—”

I was interrupted by the entrance of the doctor’s housekeeper who announced—

“Beggin’ your pardon, sir, a gentleman to see you.”

“Show him in,” Dr. Dorp said rather petulantly.

His frown of annoyance changed to a welcoming smile of recognition at the sight of the tall, bulky individual who strode through the doorway.

“How are you, Doc,” roared the big man as they shook hands cordially. “Haven’t bothered you for a long time, have I? Got a case for you now that will make you put on your thinking cap all right.”

“Sounds interesting,” replied the doctor. “Let me present an old friend of mine, Mr. Evans, who writes a story every now and then when the spirit moves him. Mr. Evans, Chief McGraw of the detective bureau. We were just discussing our mutual hobby, psychic phenomena, when you came in,” he continued, after we had acknowledged the introduction.

“No doubt Chief McGraw’s communication is of a confidential nature—” I began, with the purpose of taking leave of my host.

“Nothing secret about it so far as Dr. Dorp and his friends are concerned,” interrupted the chief. “It may be that if you are a psychologist you can offer some solution of the mystery. Of course, I don’t exactly know whether it’s a case for a psychologist or not. Damned curious thing, and ghastly, too.”

“Stay and listen if you are interested,” said the doctor.

“If it has any smattering of psychology or the occult, you know my failing,” I responded.

“Can’t say as to that,” said the chief. “It’s queer enough, though—and horrible. You gentlemen have heard of Professor Townsend, I presume.”

“You mean Albert Townsend, the chemist and inventor?” asked the doctor. “Assuredly. Who hasn’t heard of him and his queer theories about creating life from inert matter? What has he done now?”

“I don’t know whether it’s something he did or something that was done to him, but anyway he’s dead.”

“Murdered?”

"That's the point I want you to help me clear up. I don't know. His daughter 'phoned the office this morning and asked for me. When I got on the wire I could hardly understand her, she was so hysterical. Sobbed out something about her father being gone and a human skeleton lying on the floor of his laboratory. I jumped in the car and took Hirsch, the finger-print expert, out there with me. We found the frightened girl weeping in the arms of a motherly neighbor, who informed us that the laboratory was on the second floor. "The whitened skeleton of Professor Townsend, fully clothed in garments that hung like rags on a scarecrow, lay on the floor of the laboratory."

"You made sure, of course, that it really was the skeleton of the Professor."

"Beyond the least shadow of doubt. In the first place it was clothed in the professor's garments. His watch with his name in the back was ticking in the vest pocket. His monogrammed ring, a present from his daughter, circled a bony finger. On the bones of his right forearm were the marks of a fracture that had healed and the skull was slightly indented above the right temple. These marks resulted from an automobile accident in which the professor was injured two years ago. To make assurance doubly sure, we called in his dentist who really identified his own work on the teeth."

"When was the professor last seen alive?"

"That is the feature that makes the affair so uncanny. He was alive, and apparently normal mentally and physically, at dinner last evening."

"Most amazing!" exclaimed Dr. Dorp. "Suppose we go out—"

"Just what I was going to suggest," replied the chief. "My car is waiting outside. Would you care to accompany us, Mr. Evans?"

"He would perish from curiosity if he couldn't see the thing through now," said the doctor when I hesitated. "Come along with us, old man. If two minds are better than one, then surely three minds are superior to two."

We piled into the chief's roomy roadster and were soon speeding toward the house of mystery.

Two Mysterious Deaths

PRESENTLY the car stopped before a two-story brick house. Its upper windows, with shades half drawn, appeared to stare down at us with a look of sly cunning as if endeavoring to conceal some fearful secret.

A short chunky individual, smooth-faced and with a decidedly florid complexion, met us at the door. Chief McGraw introduced him as Hirsch, the finger-print expert.

"All alone, Hirsch?" asked the chief, looking about as we entered the spacious living room.

"Might as well be," replied Hirsch. "Miss Townsend is in her room with a neighbor. The cook and housemaid are out in the kitchen, scared green."

"Coroner been here?"

"No. He called me up about twenty minutes ago and said he had an inquest to attend to on the south side. Told me he didn't know how soon he could get here, but it would be several hours, at least."

"How about the prints?"

"All the finger prints in the laboratory seem to have been made by the same person, evidently the professor."

"Hum. Better 'phone headquarters right away and have them send Rooney out. He might come in handy to guard the death room in case the coroner is late."

"All right, sir. I'll call up headquarters right away." "Now, gentlemen," said the chief, turning to the doctor and me, "let us go upstairs."

We followed him up the thickly carpeted stairway and along the broad corridor at the end of which he opened a door.

I stared involuntarily at the sight of the grinning, ghastly thing that lay on the floor. Not so Dr. Dorp. He knelt beside it and examined it minutely, his keen gray eyes alert for every detail. He even touched his fingers to the white forehead and prodded the shadowy depths of the empty eye sockets.

At length he rose and washed his hands at the porcelain lavatory.

"It seems incredible," he said, "that this man could have been alive yesterday."

"Just what I was thinking," responded the chief.

"Those bones could not have been drier or whiter if they had bleached, in the sunlight for the last ten years."

The doctor now turned his attention to the contents of the laboratory. He examined the collection of re-torts, test tubes, beakers, jars, dishes and other paraphernalia spread on a porcelain-topped table set against the wall and reaching half the length of the room. The walls were shelved clear to the ceiling, and every shelf was crowded to its utmost capacity with bottles, jars and cans containing a multitude of chemicals. To these he gave but scant attention.

In the center of the immaculate white tile floor stood an open, glass-lined vat. From its height and diameter I estimated its capacity at about sixty gallons. This vat was more than a third full of a colorless, viscous liquid that gave off a queer, musty odor.

"What do you suppose that stuff is?" I asked Dr. Dorp.

"Looks like a heavy albuminous or gelatinous solution," he said. "Possibly it is some special compound the professor employed in his experiments. Mediums of this nature are often used in the cultivation of colonies of bacteria and it is possible that he intended to use it as a carrier and food for the organisms it was his ambition to create synthetically."

"Any idea what caused the death of the professor?" asked the chief.

"I have a theory," replied Dr. Dorp, "but it seems so illogical, so wildly impossible, so—er, contrary to the teachings of science, that I prefer to keep it to myself for the present, at least."

A heavy tread sounded in the hallway and a moment later a blue-uniformed officer entered.

"Hello, Rooney," greeted Chief McGraw. "I want you to see that no one disturbs this room or its contents until the coroner arrives. We are going downstairs now. Keep a weather eye on things and I'll send a man to relieve you soon. If either of these gentlemen wants to come in at any time you may admit him."

"Yes, sir. I'll remember them."

We trooped down stairs. Two women were seated in the living room. Chief McGraw presented us to the younger, who proved to be the professor's daughter, Dorothy Townsend. She was a slender girl about twenty years of age with pale, regular features and a wealth of gold-brown hair. Her large, expressive eyes were red with recent weeping and her lips quivered slightly as she bowed to us in turn and introduced us to the stout, middle-aged neighbor, Mrs. Harms, who had been endeavoring to comfort her.

"Hirsch and I are going to run down to headquarters for a couple of hours," said the chief. "Would you prefer to come with us or stay here and look around?"

"I think we had better look around a bit, if you don't mind," replied the doctor.

"All right. I'm going to send a man to relieve Rooney at six. Will be along myself a little later. If you discover anything new call me up."

When the two men were gone the doctor bowed before Miss Townsend.

"May I have a few words with you in private?" he asked.

"Certainly," she replied, rising; "in father's study, if you wish."

They entered the study, which was directly off the living room, and closed the door. They must have been gone about a half hour, but it seemed like two hours to me, as, fidgeting inwardly, I listened to Mrs. Harms' family history, her account of the death of her beloved husband, and minute descriptions of six operations she had undergone, each time, to use her own expression, "standing at the entrance of death's door." She assured me, also, that she knew what it was to have death in the home. The Grim Reaper had visited her family a score of times, she averred, and only three weeks before, one of her roomers had been found dead in bed.

She prattled on with scarce a pause until the door of the study opened. I was glad when she went upstairs with Miss Townsend and left Dr. Dorp and me together.

"Come into the study," he said. "I have learned some interesting things, and it is possible that more awaits us in here."

Professor Townsend's study was neither large nor pretentious. It was obviously the retreat of a profound student, as attested by the book-lined walls, many of the volumes of which were worn with much handling. The furniture consisted of a large, roll-top desk, a smaller typewriter desk on which stood a hooded machine, a filing cabinet, two office chairs and three comfortable overstuffed chairs, one beside the window, the other two placed conveniently under wall lights for reading.

A thick pile of typewritten manuscripts lay on the roll-top desk. The doctor divided them, handing me half and settling himself comfortably in one of the overstuffed chairs with the other half.

"Miss Townsend kindly brought these out of the files for me," explained the doctor. "I think it possible that they may shed some light on the mysterious cause of the death of their author. We can save time dividing the work."

"I believe I can conduct a more intelligent search if you will give me some idea of what I am to look for," I said.

"Quite so," he agreed. "I had forgotten for the moment that you were not familiar with the details of my interview with Miss Townsend. Let me review it briefly.

"She finished school nearly a year ago, and since that time has been acting as her father's secretary, typing his manuscripts and attending to much of his voluminous correspondence.

"He had been working day and night in his effort to prove his theory that a living organism can be created from inorganic matter. During their months of close association she found him extremely irritable until one morning about three weeks ago. It appeared that his very nature had changed over night and she assumed that he had made some important discovery. She remembers the exact date owing to the fact that Mrs. Harms' roomer was found dead in bed on the night of the supposed discovery. This roomer, who was living under an alias, was found to be a notorious

character known as Immune Benny, and is alleged to have committed numerous crimes, among which were several revolting murders, without ever having been convicted.

"After that night the professor's jubilant attitude kept up until death. He paid no attention to his correspondence or manuscripts and spent the greater part of his time in his laboratory, presumably experimenting with numerous live animals which he had delivered each day. His first experiments, she stated, were with mice, rats and guinea pigs. He next used cats, rabbits and small dogs, then larger dogs until, on the day before his death he had two huge mastiffs brought to the house and took them into the laboratory. None of the animals taken behind the door ever reappeared, and she quite naturally assumed that they had been the subjects of vivisection. My theory, is that he—"

The doctor was interrupted by a loud rap at the study door. He rose and opened it, revealing a sturdy uniformed policeman. A frightened housemaid peered around his huge bulk. The man seemed greatly perturbed. His voice shook as he asked—

"Where's Rooney?"

"He's on guard in the laboratory," replied the doctor. "Are you the man sent to relieve him?"

"I'm Officer Burke. The maid, here, showed me to the laboratory, but Rooney ain't there. It's a horrible place. Don't blame him for leavin'."

"Yes. That skeleton on the floor isn't exactly pretty."

"That skeleton? You mean them skeletons. There was two of them, and one was dressed in a cop's uniform!"

With an exclamation of surprise and horror, the doctor threw down the manuscripts he was holding and rushed for the stairway. I followed breathlessly.

A Strange Diary

WHAT we saw in that awful room of death confirmed our wildest fears. A skeleton, with the bones whitened like those of the professor, lay on the floor facing the doorway. One bony arm was stretched across the threshold as if its owner had been attempting to drag himself from the room when struck down. A blue uniform bagged loosely over the bones, and on the feet were the heavy, hobnailed, square-toed shoes I had noticed on Rooney's feet some time before.

The doctor squinted at the star on the breast of the recumbent figure. Then he turned to Officer Burke who had come up behind us.

"What was Rooney's number?" he asked.

"942."

"Then this is Rooney's uniform and it probably is his skeleton. Call up the chief and tell him what happened. This is horrible—diabolical!"

"Your theory," I said, "does this shed any light on it?"

"On the contrary," he replied, "It makes the case more baffling than ever. It seems incredible that such things can really happen. I tell you, Evans, there is some mysterious force at work here—something new and unheard of in the annals of scientific research. It is my opinion that the late Professor Townsend chanced upon some force hitherto unknown to scientists and played with it like a little child with fire until it suddenly destroyed him. The death of Officer Rooney is ample proof that this terrible force, whatever it may be, survived him.

"Now let us conjecture regarding the nature of this thing that has taken the lives of two human beings.

We know that the professor's chief ambition was to create life from inert matter. All of his experiments in the laboratory were made with this object in view. All his printed works show plainly his firm belief that the thing could be accomplished, some of them going so far as to point out the processes by which he believed protoplasm, the primitive basic life substance, might be analyzed. As protoplasm is a compound of almost unlimited complexity in its physical and chemical constitution, our most skilled chemists have been unable to unravel its secrets. In fact, the further a chemist gets in his attempts at analysis the more baffling and complex he finds it to be. Being a compound composed of complex substances which are in turn composed of others still more complex, and so on, *ad infinitum*, its secrets are fully as inscrutable as those of the starry universe.

"The professor's first step, therefore, in this seemingly impossible undertaking, would be to analyze protoplasm. Assuming that he succeeded in reducing it to its basic elements his next problem would be to take similar elements and, through a process even more complex than the previous one, assemble and reassemble them until they were capable of sustaining life.

"Let us suppose that he did these things. Let us assume that he has succeeded in creating protoplasm. What next? We will say that he has taken some primitive form of life for a pattern, a moneron, perhaps, the most simple type of animal, consisting of a single cell of protoplasm. There still exists a difference between the moneron and the synthetically created cell. Chemically and physically they are the same, but the moneron is *alive*.

"What is life? Broadly defined as we recognize it on this earth, it is a temporary union of mind and matter. There may be, and probably is another kind of life which is simply mind without matter, but we of the material world know it not. To us, mind without matter or matter without mind are equally dead. The moneron has a mind—a soul—a something that makes it a living individual. Call it what you will. The professor's cell of man-made protoplasm has not. Can you conceive of any possible way in which he could, having reached this stage, create an individual mind or soul, an essence of life that, once united with his cell of protoplasm would form an entity?"

"It seems impossible," I admitted.

"So it seems," he replied, "yet it is only on such an hypothesis that I can account for the mysterious deaths of the professor and Officer Rooney."

"But I don't see how a moneron or a creature remotely resembling one could kill and completely devour a man in less than two hours," I objected.

"Nor I," agreed the doctor. "In fact I am of the opinion that, if the professor did succeed in creating life, the result was unlike any creature large or small, now inhabiting the earth—a hideous monster, perhaps, with undreamed of powers and possibilities—an alien organism among billions of other organisms, hating them all because it has nothing in common with them—a malignant entity governed solely by the primitive desire for food and growth with only hatred of and envy for the more fortunate *natural* creatures around it."

"If the professor did succeed in creating or discovering such a creature," I said, "it is evidently in this house at this very moment. Unless it has the faculty of making itself invisible a thorough search should reveal its whereabouts, for having consumed two men it must be a monster of no mean proportions."

"That is true," replied the doctor, "however, we

have another hypothesis that is equally worthy of our consideration if we accept the premise that the professor created a living creature. Judging from his writings he spent a considerable portion of his time studying and experimenting in microbiology. Suppose he succeeded in creating a microscopic organism, and that organism had the power to reproduce its kind. If it reproduced by fission, that is, by simply dividing itself after it had attained a certain size, the only check to its increase would be death or lack of food. The more food it could obtain that much more rapidly would it and its descendants multiply. Countless billions of such creatures might occupy this room and yet be invisible without the aid of a compound microscope. There is ample room for a swarm of such creatures numerous enough to devour a man to float in the air above our heads without revealing its presence."

The words of the doctor affected me strangely. Involuntarily I looked upward, half expecting a swarm of man-eating microbes to descend and devour me. For a moment I was seized with a feeling of panic so strong I could scarcely restrain myself from leaping for the door. The fact that the sun had nearly set and dusky shadows were thickening in the room augmented the illusion. I crossed the floor nervously and pressed the switch beside the door. Instantly the place was flooded with blue-white light from a cluster of powerful globes depending from the middle of the ceiling.

As I was recrossing the room my eyes fell on the contents of a glass-lined tank. I stared unbelievably for a moment, then called Dr. Dorp.

"What is it, Evans?" he asked.

"The liquid in this tank," I replied. "It has changed color. Something has turned it pink."

"The effect of the artificial light, no doubt," he said, coming up beside me. Then I saw the expression of doubt on his face change to one of surprise and wonder.

"You are right," he exclaimed. "It has not only changed color but a still more remarkable transformation has taken place. When we noticed it this afternoon, the tank was a third full of the colorless liquid. *This pink fluid reaches half way to the top!*"

A Drawer Filled with Bones

THE tread of many feet sounded in the hall.

Chief McGraw paused in the doorway, staring ing down at the blue-clad skeleton on the floor, a look of horror on his face. Behind him were four policemen in uniform.

"Is—is that the skeleton of poor old Rooney?" McGraw asked. It's too ghastly a thing to believe.

"I'm afraid it is," replied Dr. Dorp.

The chief knelt and examined the star on the bagging blue coat.

"It's hellish, positively hellish," he said, rising. "Do you know what killed him?"

"We are working on a theory—" began the doctor, but was interrupted by the chief.

"Theories be damned!" he snapped. "Work on your theories if you want to. This thing has gone too far. I'm going to get some *facts*." He swung on the four men behind him. "Search the house," he said. "Look sharp for anything of a suspicious nature. An infernal machine, perhaps, or a blood-sucking animal. There is a man-killer of some kind, human or otherwise, hidden in this house, and it's our business to find it."

When the men had departed he stepped over Rooney's skeleton.

"I'll search this room myself," he said.

He did, with professional thoroughness, looking for hidden panels and sounding the walls, both in the open

areas and behind the shelves, for hollow spaces. Then he began opening the drawers in a tall cabinet that stood in one corner, disclosing surgical and dissecting instruments of various kinds, an indexed set of microscope slides with some extra lenses, platinum dishes; porcelain drying pans, crucibles, glass rods and tubing, pipettes, rubber tubing and stoppers, rubber gloves and aprons, and other miscellaneous laboratory paraphernalia.

The bottom drawer of the cabinet was quite large and deep. The chief cried out excitedly when he saw its contents.

"Good Lord! Look at that!" he exclaimed.

It was filled to the top with dry, white bones.

"Nothing but the bones of small animals," said Dr. Dorp, picking up a skull. "This, for instance, is the skull of a dog." Then, taking up another: "Here is the skull of a rabbit. Notice the characteristic chisel-shaped teeth. This one beside it once supported the be-whiskered countenance of a common house cat."

"What do you suppose he was doing with them?" asked the chief.

"It is my belief that they were brought here to be killed and devoured by the same thing that killed the professor and Roomey."

"And that thing is—"

"At present, merely a shadowy theory, although it most certainly has an existence. There is a power in this house that is a menace to everyone under this roof—a malignant entity that destroys human beings in some mysterious manner unparalleled in the annals of science or human experience. This much we know, reasoning from effects. Reasoning from possible causes we are aware that the hobby of Professor Townsend was the endeavor to create a living thing from inorganic matter, and putting the two together it seems to me that the logical hypothesis would be that he either succeeded in creating a monster of a sort unknown to biologists, or discovered and developed unheard of powers and habits in a creature already known."

"If there's such a thing in this house, believe me I'm going to find it," said the chief, stamping out of the room.

"Now that we have a few moments to ourselves," said Dr. Dorp when McGraw had departed, "let us conduct a search, or rather an inquiry on our own account. I perceive that we have a very excellent compound microscope at our disposal and am curious to examine the liquid which has so mysteriously risen and changed color in the tank."

He took a blank slide from the cabinet drawer and a small glass rod from the table. As he was about to dip the rod in the liquid he uttered a low exclamation of surprise.

"What's up now?" I asked.

"This amazing liquid has again become transparent," he replied. "The red tint is gone."

He plunged the tip of the rod into the viscous liquid, twisted it slightly and withdrew it. Although the liquid seemed quite heavy it slipped from the end of the rod much after the manner of the white of an egg. After considerable juggling he succeeded in obtaining a small amount which he smeared on the slide. He then placed the slide in position and adjusted the microscope with a practiced hand.

"Well," I asked, after he had peered into the eyepiece for a full ten minutes, "what is the stuff, anyway?"

"Here, look for yourself," he replied.

What I saw in the field of the microscope appeared to be a mesh work or foam of exceedingly fine bubbles or perhaps globules. Granules of different sizes and shapes seemed imbedded in these globules and the

whole was dotted at intervals with small white objects. While I watched, several of these white objects seemed to dissolve and disappeared. All of them apparently were endowed with life, for I noticed that they expanded or contracted spasmodically and seemed endeavoring to push their way through the surrounding bubbles.

"Seems to be a sort of foam," I said, "with something alive floating in it."

"The foam, as you can call it, bears a singular resemblance to the basic life principle, protoplasm, when seen under the microscope," replied the doctor.

"But those white things—" I began.

"The white things," he went on, "are the living remnants of a complex organism that has been destroyed. They are waging an unequal and hopeless battle against assimilation by the globules that surround them. These faithful guardians of the organism when alive still fight, and will continue to fight the enemy until, figuratively speaking, the last man falls."

"But what are they?" I demanded.

"Unless I am very much mistaken," he replied, "they are—"

His answer was cut short by the appearance of Chief McGraw.

"Coroner and jury are downstairs," he said tersely. "I suppose they'll want your testimony. I'll leave a couple of men on guard here if you want to come down."

"Let us go down to the study and complete our perusal of the professor's manuscripts while the jury is in session," said the doctor. "We can thus save considerable time and will be on hand when they are ready to question us."

We met Coroner Haynes and his jurors at the foot of the stairs. They were about to go up for an inspection of the laboratory and its gruesome contents.

Dr. Dorp switched on one of the reading lamps and closed the door. Then he established himself in a comfortable chair with a pile of manuscripts and I followed his example. We found essays and articles on almost every subject pertaining to the transmission or generation of life. There were papers on anatomy, bacteriology, cell-structure, microbiology and embryology. There were treatises on evolution, spontaneous generation, and the structures and habits of micro-organisms. A forceful and extremely impressive essay set forth the astounding theory that all life was merely a form of force generated from matter. The reasoning was, of course, purely analogical. The professor's contention, stated briefly, was that just as electricity, a force that is invisible and indefinable, is generated by the friction of particles of certain kinds of matter, so life is generated and springs into being when certain other types of matter come together in the right proportions and combinations.

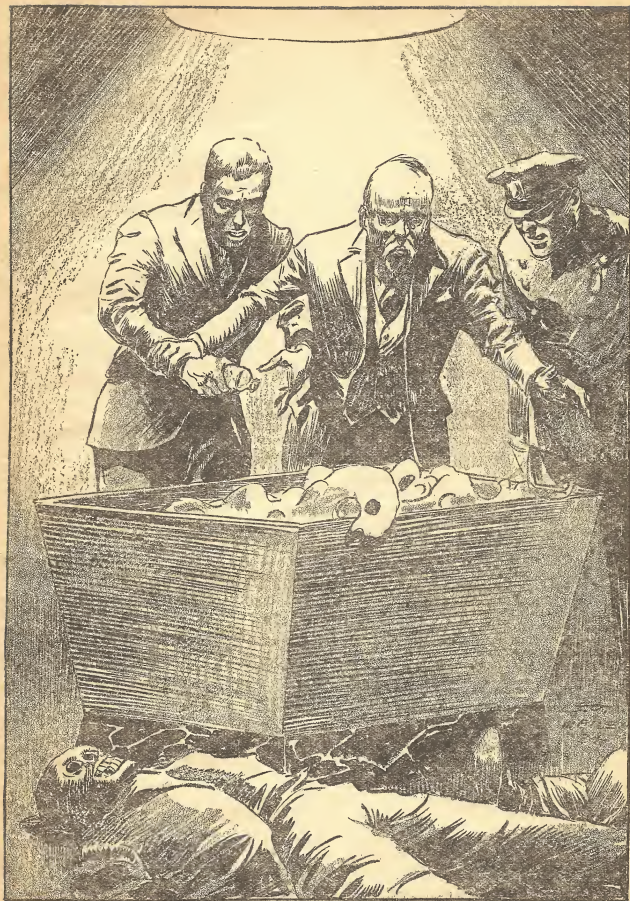
"What is your opinion of their theory?" I asked Dr. Dorp.

"It is most cleverly put, but false because based on the false premise of the materialists that there are but two things in the universe, matter and force. They do not recognize the power that controls the force which moves the matter toward a fixed objective. That power is mind. Thus, to them, all life and all mind are merely forms of force generated originally from inert matter."

"If the professor succeeded in creating a living thing from inert matter," I said, "it seems to me that he has demonstrated his proposition."

"Why?"

"Because he was experimenting with dead matter and not with mind or living creatures. There would



"The nucleus!" cried the doctor excitedly, shifting the bottle. "Pour it on the nucleus!"

be no mind or soul involved to inherit its being from a parent mind or soul. A new life entity would be generated, as it were, from matter which formerly contained no life."

"I think," said the doctor quietly, "you would have stated the proposition more accurately had you said that a life entity—a mind without a body—had been induced to enter the body synthetically created."

Our discourse was interrupted by Chief McGraw, who informed us that we were wanted by the coroner.

The Coroner's Jury

DR. DORP did the talking before the coroner's jury. All the way through his testimony was negative. When asked if he had any idea what killed the professor and the policeman he replied that he had several ideas, but none of them would be worth bringing before the jury without more facts to substantiate them. I could see that his purpose was to get the inquest over with as soon as possible so we might continue the investigation.

After due deliberation a verdict of "Death from cause or causes unknown" was brought in and the coroner departed with his men.

"Now that the inquest is over, what do you suggest?" McGraw asked the doctor.

"My suggestion is that we immediately destroy the liquid in the glass-lined tank in the laboratory."

"Why?"

"Because I am convinced that it is at least one of the causes of the deaths that have taken place in this house."

"I suppose you have a good reason for your assumption."

"An excellent one, I believe. While you and your men were searching the house, Mr. Evans and I conducted a little investigation of our own. We put some of the liquid under the compound microscope and as we both saw the same things I am convinced that my eyes did not deceive me. Tell the chief what you saw, Evans."

I described the foam work, the granules and the white objects which appeared to be alive and struggling to escape.

"All Greek to me," said the chief. "What was it?"

"The foam work with its accompanying granules closely resembled protoplasm, the basic life substance."

"And the white things—"

"Were white blood corpuscles from the veins of a human being. They were the strongest of the human body cells to resist assimilation and consequently the last to succumb. The red corpuscles turned the liquid pink for a while but they had disappeared before we made our microscopic examination."

"Good Lord, why didn't you tell me this before?" demanded the chief. "Let's go up and destroy the stuff now. Those two men up there might be killed any minute."

We found the two policemen unharmed and made our plans for the destruction of the substance in the tank. Several bottles of acid stood under the table and the doctor selected one nearly full of sulphuric acid.

"Open the windows," he ordered. "This is going to make a horrible stench."

Then he removed the rubber stopper from the mouth of the bottle. The searing liquid struck the heavy fluid in the tank with a hissing sound and bored into it like hot water poured in a snow bank. The jelly-like mass quivered slightly, and pungent, nauseating fumes arose to torment our nostrils.

Then, suddenly, as if in horrible pain and awakened to the danger of its dissolution, the plasmic substance began to heave and billow toward the top of the tank with a movement suggestive of the writhing of a huge coiled serpent in its death agony. By directing the stream of acid at the various peaks that arose we endeavored to keep it all washed down to a common level. Then a dozen peaks rose simultaneously and I noticed that one was capped with a round ball in the center of which was a black spot.

"The nucleus!" cried the doctor excitedly, shifting the bottle. "Pour it on the nucleus!"

We were too late. The thing upreared itself with amazing speed and lopped over the edge of the tank opposite us. We dropped the nearly emptied bottle into the tank and rushed around to intercept it, just in time to see the ball containing the black spot separate itself from the stringy mass by which it was suspended, drop to the floor and roll under the table.

An exciting chase of several minutes ensued. The thing darted, or rather, rolled from place to place with amazing rapidity. The tile floor was cracked in a dozen places by blows from the clubs of the two policemen who assisted us. At length we drove it into the corner beneath the lavatory and advanced in close formation. I had armed myself with a large spatula, the doctor gripped a heavy pestle, the two policemen had their clubs and the chief held his automatic pistol in readiness.

As we drew close we moved with extreme caution, our nerves taut, our weapons ready to strike when the thing should make its dash for liberty. We waited breathlessly, but no movement came from the corner. I prodded the space behind the water pipes with my spatula. Still no sign of the thing we were after. Then I peered behind them and saw the reason—a hole an inch in diameter in the tile floor, probably drilled in the wrong place by a careless plumber and left unfilled because it was out of sight.

When I pointed it out to Dr. Dorp he shook his head solemnly.

"The Malignant Entity has escaped," he said. "No one in this house—in this community, even—is safe until it is captured or killed."

"You don't mean to tell me that little thing we were chasing around the room could kill anybody," said the chief.

"I am not so sure that it could kill any one now that it has been reduced to the size of a golf ball, although the cytoplasm surrounding the nucleus evidently has the power of quickly dissolving and assimilating living tissues. Its growth, apparently, is only limited by the amount of food it can find."

"Maybe we'd better get the women out of the house," said the chief.

"The sooner, the better. I suggest also that you surround the place with men armed with shotguns. If that thing gets out and starts to grow I shudder to think of what may happen. Children will not be safe outside their own homes, and perhaps not even within them. Adults will be attacked as soon as the creature has attained sufficient size, and there is always the possibility that it may have the power to reproduce its kind. Organisms of this kind, as a rule, multiply with exceeding rapidity. Think of a thousand or perhaps a million such monsters roaming through the land. It is almost impossible to kill them because of the power we have just witnessed, of leaving the body, no matter how large it has grown, taking with it only enough cytoplasm to protect the nucleus and make a new start."

We were all gasping from the fumes that came out

of the tank, and glad to get away from the laboratory.

When all were assembled in the living room the chief phoned headquarters for men and shotguns while Dr. Dorp and I explained what we had found to Miss Townsend.

After we had described our adventure in detail, the doctor said:

"It seems strange that your father left no records of his experiments with the monster."

"I feel quite sure that he left a record of some sort, though I have never seen it," replied Miss Townsend.

"Have you any idea where it is?"

"Perhaps in his safe in the study."

"I do not remember seeing a safe in the study."

"Naturally. It is hidden. Come and I will show you where it is."

We followed her into the study and she swung back one of the bookcases which was hung on concealed hinges, revealing a small wall safe.

"Would you mind opening it for us?" asked the doctor.

She turned the dial to number twelve, then pulled the lever. It did not move. She seemed surprised, set the dial more carefully and tried again with the same result.

"It's no use, I guess," she said. "The last number of the combination is twelve. He usually turned it back to one and then it was only necessary to turn it to twelve to open it. He must have locked it last night."

"Don't you know the combination?"

"No. Father was the only one who knew that."

"I wonder if you would object to our blowing the safe?" he asked.

"Not if it will be of any assistance to you."

Chief McGraw, who had just finished calling headquarters, came into the room.

"Think you can get us a safe-cracker to-night, Chief?" asked the doctor.

"Get you most anything you want. What's in the safe?"

"We believe it contains some valuable information regarding the thing we were chasing a while ago."

"I'll get a man out here right-away," said McGraw, going once more to the phone.

Officer Burke escorted Miss Townsend, Mrs. Harms and the two servants to the Harms home, where they were to spend the night.

Shortly afterward there arrived twenty policemen armed with shotguns and carrying several dozen bullseye lanterns. They brought extra weapons which were distributed to all of us who remained in the house, the chief, the doctor, the four policemen and myself. Burke was to remain on guard next door.

A ring of lanterns was placed around the house and twenty armed men were posted at intervals between them. We then divided our forces as follows: One policeman was placed on guard in the laboratory. Chief McGraw with another policeman patrolled the upper rooms and halls. The doctor and one policeman remained on the first floor and I, accompanied by a strapping young fellow named Black, who had recently been admitted to the force, did sentry duty in the basement.

Theorizing

THE Townsend basement was divided into three rooms, each lighted rather dimly by the yellow rays from an incandescent globe suspended on a short drop-cord. The furnace room and coal bins were situated at the rear end. The middle compartment

contained a miscellaneous assortment of boxes, barrels, garden tools, household tools, canned fruits, empty fruit jars, bottles, and what not. The front room was used as a laundry.

Officer Black and I searched each room thoroughly, using a flashlight in the dark corners and moving everything that wasn't fastened to the floor or walls. Several mice jumped out from behind boxes and barrels, but we saw no sign of the creature we were hunting.

We were peering behind the furnace when several loud squeaks came to us from the middle room.

With shotgun held in readiness, I moved stealthily toward the point from which the sound came. There, in the center of the floor almost under the yellow electric light bulb, I saw the fast disappearing body of a mouse under a mass of plasmic jelly.

My first impulse was to shoot, but on second thought, I decided to attempt to capture the thing alive if possible. Instructing Black to hold his weapon in readiness in case I failed, I unscrewed the lid from a large empty fruit jar and walked softly toward the center of the floor. I expected the thing to spring away, but to my surprise it lay almost motionless on the body of its victim. I could see streaks of bright red flowing through the jelly-like mass as blood of the mouse was drawn up for assimilation.

I clapped the mouth of the jar over the creature and still it made no effort to escape. Then, sliding a fire shovel which Black brought me, under the thing and its victim, I turned the jar right side up. It fell to the bottom of the receptacle, still clinging to the now formless mass that had once been a mouse and making no effort to escape. I put the lid in place and screwed it down tight.

"Now try to get away, you devil!" I cried, shaking the jar exultantly.

I almost dropped it a moment later as a muffled explosion jarred the building. Then I remembered Chief McGraw's safe-cracker, and hurried upstairs.

When I reached the living-room, Dr. Dorp was emerging from the study in a cloud of plaster dust. In his hand was a thick, loose-leaf book.

"I have the professor's diary," he called excitedly.

"Don't get fussed over such trifles," I replied. "Look what I've got. Caught it alive, too."

I put the jar on the table and he squinted at it for a moment. The blood-bloated monstrosity had separated its shapeless hulk from the whitened bones of its victim and was sluggishly crawling up the side of the glass.

"You caught it, sure enough," he said. "I only hope it hasn't any little sons or daughters about."

"I'll keep the house under guard for a couple of days," said Chief McGraw, who had come down to learn the result of the crackman's labors. "If there are any more of these things around they ought to show themselves by that time."

The doctor drew a chair up to the table and eagerly scanned the pages of the diary while we watched the antics of the thing in the jar. It kept getting lighter colored all the time, and more lively. By the time the cytoplasm had become transparent it was racing around, contorting its body into all kinds of shapes—flat, oval, and round. At times it put forth pseudopods, sometimes elongating them until it resembled a small cuttle fish.

"September twenty-third was the night Immune Benny died wasn't it, Chief?" asked the doctor.

"Right. Why?"

"Then this diary tallies with Miss Townsend's testimony. Here is the professor's entry.

"September 23, Nearly Midnight.

"Eureka! I have succeeded. I placed a tiny drop of syntheplasm on the slide to-night as I have done a thousand times before, and covered it with a weak, sterile solution of gelatine.

"I watched it steadily for a half hour but nothing happened until, suddenly, I noticed a tiny black spot forming in its center. I am positive there were no animalcules either in the syntheplasm or the solution, yet no sooner had the black spot become readily distinguishable than my speck of syntheplasm began moving about as if searching for food. Evidently it cannot subsist on gelatine.

"I next introduced a rhizopod into the solution. My animal slightly resembles it, but is larger and gets about much faster. I wanted to compare the two but the rhizopod was quickly devoured. Now I know what to feed it."

"It is growing late so I will not read all the details to you," continued the doctor. "Suffice to say that the professor discovered his synthetically created creature would feed on nothing but living creatures. He fed it so many microscopic animals the second day that it grew to a size visible to the naked eye. Then he fed it gnats, mosquitos, flies, beetles, and finally mice, when it became so large he was forced to transfer it from the small porcelain dish in which he kept it, to a much larger one.

"The thing grew at a prodigious rate of speed. Its growth seemed only limited by the amount of living creatures it was permitted to devour. At length he was compelled to keep it in the glass-lined tank which he had been using for the culture of infusoria. Its victims were thrown into the tank alive and were quickly killed by the monster. He noticed that it was sluggish while assimilating its food, but moved with cat-like quickness when hungry. Though it had no eyes it seemed to sense the approach of food in some way and, toward the last, stretched forth pseudopods and snatched the animals from his hands.

"Yesterday the professor led two mastiffs into the room. Hardly had he closed the door of the laboratory before the monster was out of the tank. It killed and devoured the two big dogs in less than a half hour—then crawled back sluggishly into the tank to digest its meal. Thus ends the written record of the professor's adventures with the Malignant Entity. His whitened bones on the floor of the laboratory are mute testimony of what occurred."

There was a moment of awed silence when the doctor finished his narrative. His eyes fell on the struggling thing in the glass jar.

"What are you going to do with it?" I asked.

"Come," he said, taking up the jar and starting for the basement. "I will show you."

The chief and I followed him down the basement stairs and into the furnace room. He opened the fire door and tossed the jar on the glowing coals.

The thing raced about spasmodically for a moment in the intense heat, then fell huddled in the bottom of the jar. Suddenly, as if inflated from beneath, it puffed upward and outward almost filling the receptacle in a shape that resembled a human head. I thought this only a figment of my imagination at first—blinked—and looked a second time. The face of a man stared back at me from behind the curved glass, eyes glowing with malevolent hatred and lips drawn back in a snarl that revealed crooked, yellow fangs. For a moment only the vision held. The next instant the jar was empty of all save a tiny pile of white, flaky ash and the bones of the mouse.

Dr. Dorp shut the door suddenly and noisily.

"That face," I exclaimed. "Did you see it also?"

"A queer distortion of the gas-inflated protoplasm he replied.

Chief McGraw seemed pocketed, perturbed. He drew a long black cigar from his pocket, lighted it and puffed nervously for a moment.

"Distortion hell," he muttered. "It was a perfect double for the face of Immune Benny!"

THE END

The Breathing of Fishes

IT is conceded that fish require oxygen for their life and in the vast majority of fishes this oxygen is derived from the gas as dissolved in the water. But oxygen is so slightly soluble that fish can obtain from water an astonishingly small quantity for their existence. The following letter from Dr. C. W. Coates, of the New York Aquarium, was written in answer to a query from the Editor of this magazine and will be found most interesting.

"All fishes so far recorded breathe dissolved oxygen except one or two special creatures, such as lung fish, which are solely dependent on atmospheric oxygen.

"The amount of oxygen available for fishes is very

small and is to a large extent dependent upon the temperature of the water which will dissolve more oxygen when it is cold than when it is warm. A count which is usually used, but which is not always accurate is about six parts per million of dissolved oxygen. As this tends to keep itself in balance with any air immediately above by invasion through the surface. Consequently, a fish could live in a hermetically sealed container with a small air chamber above the water for a very long period, provided there were no complications.

"Free dissolved oxygen is essential to the living fish."

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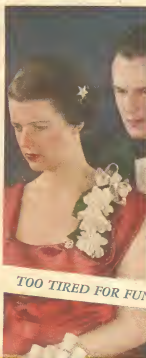
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